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Mayer

The Candidate

CELEBRATION

The central figure of this tense, uncompromising novel is Billy Clelland, Governor of one of the farming States in the Middle West of America. Clelland has made a success of his governorship. Handsome, accessible, he conceals an inner ruthlessness in the conduct of the State's affairs beneath a hail-fellow-well-met front of tolerance and affability. Now his name is being canvassed as a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. Of this man who, believing profoundly in himself, is not afraid to practise the lesser evil for what he believes the greater good Mr. Mayer draws a remarkable portrait.

Clelland has two enemies, a boyhood rival who now owns the State's leading chain of newspapers, and Irving Moss, the chain's chief reporter. He has one emotional problem, though he has driven it below the surface of his mind. He still loves Helen Sullivan, the mistress he discarded in order to become Governor ; and Helen is Irving Moss's sister. But all political problems Clelland is confident he can solve, even if it means sacrificing an old colleague whom he knows to be innocent of the gambling racket he accidentally unearths

He has, however, given hostages to fortune. On one issue he has left himself no real way out. And even as he accepts the definite invitation to stand for the Presidency, even as his supporters at the annual Reporters' " Rag " are shouting " Meet the Candidate ", Irving Moss is preparing the alternative editorials, either of which can strike him down

The Governor dominates his surroundings, but there are many other vivid characters in this very vivid book. Individually they stand out in a fast-moving story. Compositely they present an absorbing picture of political life, brash, vigorous, ominously materialistic, in America today.

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THE CANDIDATE

Billy Clelland is the Governor of one of the farming states in America's Middle West. Charming, able, ruthless, he has achieved outstanding success. His name is being canvassed as a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. But he has a skeleton in his cupboard in the form of a former mistress and two powerful enemies, one of whom is the mistress's brother. This is the story, against the background of American state politics, racketeering and journalism, of their attempt to ruin his career.

THE CANDIDATE



Martin Mayer



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To L. N.

“Keep away from that wheelbarrow—what the hell do you know about machinery?”

***—attributed to Elbert Hubbard
by Eugene Manlove Rhodes***

BOOK ONE

Chapter One

WITH lunch less than half an hour away they walked briskly down the gravel path toward the huge white barn set gleaming on the flat, green field. In the first row of three were William (Billy) Clelland, Governor of the State; Wesley F. Hofmann, President of the State University; and Gus Forester, Caretaker of the Animal Husbandry Barns of the School of Agriculture—a steel-gray head, a white head, a dirty bald head. Behind them, talking, looking, sighing with boredom, came politicians, bureaucrats, professors, instructors, reporters, photographers and state troopers. Above them was the bright October sun; about them the brook-cold air of the northern plains; before them, nearing now, the spotless, metal, insulated barn, and the cows.

The cows were, indeed, making themselves part of the atmosphere. Their routine upset, their cells polished to uncomfortable brilliance, their coats scrubbed by hurried lackeys, their udders chilled by great blasts from the de-

odorizing blowers, they roared disapproval at the approaching official party. Smothered by their bewildered lowing, conversation died; and the procession was listening when Forester spoke in his bright old-man's voice.

"'Pears," he said carefully, "like the Guvnor got the cows all excited."

The Governor snorted; a step behind him his personal executive assistant, Frank Reed, a young man, laughed aloud. Well behind them on the path two state-capitol reporters exchanged practiced, secretive smiles; and photographer Harry O'Connor threw a flashbulb in the air and caught it, dangerously, with a happy, graceful motion. Otherwise the party showed discomfort and official displeasure.

Forester chuckled and wriggled his backside happily, and both the chuckle and the wriggle were deliberate: Forester was shrewd; he had learned young that there was little profit in brains, and had put his mouth where the money was. Now he was an outstanding character, a touch of the good earth amidst the gray Gothic spires of the University, a flavor of old pioneer reality amidst the foreign books—it was practically required that every fraternity feed him a free meal once a month. Even President Hofmann, who was a physicist and knew about bombs and was not, as a usual matter, entirely stupid, considered Gus an asset, a valuable part of the University.

The Governor knew better; and after his snort, as an apology to science, he turned to The Chief, the Chairman of the Animal Husbandry Department, and asked the cost of the new milking machines. The Chief told him, and then they were at the gates to the new barn, the state senators

were crowding around to get in the pictures, and O'Connor was squeezing through the doorway with his big black suitcase. He lowered the suitcase onto the tile floor, and began slapping plates and flashbulbs into his camera. The bright sun came through the high windows to gleam from the white tile walls, and the party tramped past the now-frightened cows to the center of the largest barn in the Midwest, the most modern dairy barn in the world.

"Heh!" said The Chief, glancing at the Governor with shy pride. "How d'you like it?"

"Chief, it's a dilly."

"May we quote you, Governor?"

"I wouldn't have used the word otherwise—but you can't quote that."

"Right."

O'Connor examined one of his plates and slowly returned it to the square suitcase, and Frank Reed shook his head at a mooing cow. The reporters returned to the attack.

"Governor, would you say it's worth X million dollars?"

"Of course I would. I signed the bill. This is one of the nation's great agricultural states, and anything that advances agriculture is good for the people of this state. The students who learn scientific dairy farming here will—but you can fill in the rest yourselves, can't you? They want to show me the place and I want to see it."

"There might be a little more, Governor. . . ."

The Governor waved at Reed. "Get it from the birthday boy," he said. "I'll sign anything Frank says." He took The Chief's arm and the old man led him around the barn, President Hofmann and the six state senators close behind, The Chief quavering praises of the intricate drains that

ran to a central fertilizer cesspool in the wheat field, the rockwool blown between the tiles and the metal walls, the chrome-touched milking machines, the hygienic feed bins, the fine herd of Guernseys, the vials of semen from a great bull, now dead, the special stalls for mothers and calves, the refrigerated tank in which the raw milk was kept. . . . The Governor nodded, and smiled, and said, "Money well spent": good for the students, good for The Chief. Behind him the state senators listened and, in their dull way, thought; the reporters took notes as Reed fed them a statement; the animals rattled their stalls and complained; Forester rubbed a cow's flank, showing his great affection for cows; O'Connor ran about the edges of the party like a sheep dog, cutting in finally to isolate the lead ewe. He slid between Hofmann and the Governor, and leaped.

"If you don't mind, sir. . . . Ought to get the pictures in now, so we can all eat some lunch. . . . Won't take long."

"Certainly, Harry. What do you want me to do?"

Another photographer, from downstate, followed the blazed trail. "Well, sir," he said, bowing slightly, nervously, "if we could get you milking a cow . . . you know, using one of the new machines . . ."

O'Connor labored and kept a straight face: the Governor shook his head amiably. "Maybe Dewey," he said. "Not me."

Hofmann intervened. "Perhaps we could stand by while Gus milks her," he said, and Forester drew near the circle, fixing his grin.

"That'd be fine," O'Connor said.

"Milk it by hand if you like," Forester said suggestively, flexing his thin arms in his filthy leather jacket.

The Chief squeaked, but before he could rise to full rage the Governor dropped a commanding hand on Forester's arm. "That won't be necessary, Gus," he said. He looked down the row of stalls, picked a cow that had quieted herself and was chewing gently, and pointed her out. "That one all right, Chief?"

"Fine, Governor."

"All right, Gus," the Governor said. "Do your stuff."

Forester went to the corner and wheeled out one of the milking machines; the Governor and Hofmann arranged themselves about the steel half-gate to the appointed stall. O'Connor took four quick, nervous pictures of the two men at the gate, and then Forester opened the bars and began fiddling with the long hoses on the shiny machine. Tentatively, the strangers entered the stall.

The cow looked around at them as they passed her head, and continued chewing.

"Let's get the senators into the picture," the Governor said. "They pay taxes, too."

"Perhaps one more without them," said the downstate photographer. "If you don't mind. . . . Might make a better picture."

"Anything you say. Your managing editor will throw us out anyway, when the football scores come in."

The senators filed by; the cow, bewildered but still not offended, backed slightly to make room for them; they rubbed against the walls to get behind the Governor. They were thirsty. O'Connor screwed a new lens into his camera; Forester attached the last of the hoses; the two photographers squatted. . . .

"Never used to see you in these parts much when you was just a teacher," Forester said, raising his head.

O'Connor whipped out a plate, dropped it in his suitcase, replaced it, barked, "Please, Gus! Get down, Gus!"

The rain of flashes stopped. "A little closer to the cow, please, if you don't mind, Governor." The Governor moved and looked down at Forester.

"I was in a different department," he said.

Again the eye-popping lights struck the party; the cow stamped her foot and bellowed, and Forester patted her encouragingly on the flank. "Gotta know a lot of things when you're governor, eh?"

"I think that's it!" O'Connor said. "Maybe one more without the senators!"

Still clinging to the walls, the senators began to move out. The Governor gave Reed a quick look from the corners of his eyes, then dropped his hand on Forester's shoulder again and looked square at the reporters. "You want the job, Gus?" he said, and winked.

2

Across the farm, over the flags on the football field, past the clumsy Rockefeller-Gothic spires of the college, down the long hill of fine homes to the business district, across the railroad tracks, over the factories for automobile bodies and furniture and telephone parts, down the hill of bad homes to the slum district of Eastham—some eight miles from the barn, set off from a narrow street by a thin border of ill-kept lawn—was a square brick building six stories high: the Mary Hospital of Eastham. It was fifty-one years old; its brown bricks and white stone balconies had been

blackened by factory smoke carried on the prevailing wind; its income had been damaged by the decline of the surrounding neighborhood; its prestige had been destroyed by the construction of a new chrome-steel Catholic hospital near the college. Now it was a charitable sanatorium of last resort, with five floors for maternity and one for emergency.

On the fifth floor were two wards, each two hundred and eight feet long, each with sixty beds, and sixty women. It was slightly after noon; the October brightness fell in the wards on dingy linoleum floors. Visiting hour had arrived, and almost half the beds were fenced to cubicles by graying cardboard screens. Behind one of the screens Lou Mancioni rested his thin, muscular body on a four-legged stool and watched his wife, Mary Pickford Francesca Giambattista Mancioni, swing back and forth, painfully, between disordered gray sheets.

Mancioni was bent forward on the stool, his hands—too large for his arms—clasped between his thin, strong legs, his head tilted to watch, thrust forward in the effort to help. His black eyes were dull, but there was a quantity of pain behind them, and he tried to think. This would be their fourth child; they had no plumbing or electricity, but they had three children. They lived on twelve dollars a week from the state assistance fund: Mancioni was unemployed, almost always unemployed. It was nobody's fault; nobody had much reason to hire Mancioni. He was stupid beyond education, and when he worked he wasted his strength in clumsiness. But he was not mean and he was not vicious; he had a certain pride and he loved his wife. He hated to see her in pain.

She lurched in the bed again, and kicked the footboard,

and then lay still, gathering her strength for the next spasm. She opened her eyes and through the haze of brightness saw her husband; she hated to see him. She was thirty-two; she had married Mancioni four and half years before, partly from fear, partly from spite. Then Mancioni had been a railroad porter, earning enough, at least, to take her to the movies. Six weeks after they were married he had lost the job; the time since then seemed to her continuous misery, with loud children and insufficient food and no movies. And now she was flabby and stupid and had no nice clothes; it was miserable, most likely it was hopeless. She let her body hang on the bed, and waited, consoling herself with the thought that this child was probably not his; she had, she believed, conceived it during the week of his most recent job—trucking semipoisonous canned goods across state lines, at far less than union wages, for a small, corrupt restaurant supply house—and he, of course, could not remember that far back.

She opened her eyes again; he was still looking at her. "I got a job," he said, his small mouth smiling crookedly, revealing the pointed white teeth. "I can't be here tonight. Is it okay?"

She shook her head against the pillows. "Sure."

"I figured we needed the money," he said, moving his hand in front of his face, back and forth. "I had to get some money—for the baby."

She looked at him; he seemed tiny and far away. "Just one night," he said. "I'll be here tomorrow. The baby'll be born by then, the baby'll be here, won't it?"

The cramp came again, more quickly now, and as she closed her eyes she saw the long lines pull down his narrow

face; he was afraid to look at her. She was filled with rage, her rage, her body's rage, her child's rage; she pulled in her lower lip and bit it.

"I get some money for it," he said. "I figured I had to get some money—for the baby."

"Sure," she said. "How much can they give you—one night's work?"

"Maybe I get a lot of money," he said.

She had not been listening; the words came slowly to her mind and formed themselves more slowly into meaning. Then she moved her head quickly to look him in the face: he was lying.

"Why do they pay a driver like you a lot of money—a driver without a license?"

He shook his head, bent, ran a short, hairy finger up one leg of the stool.

"Why?" she said again.

"You don't care if I'm not here tonight, you don't care? I got to get some money—for the baby."

The cramp came again; she pounded her tight red fists on the mattress. "What do I care?" she yelled. "To hell with you!" Then the pain was worse; she jumped and screamed.

The stout, short, middle-aged nun was there before Mancioni could call for her. She took the mother's wrist with one large, rough hand, and ran the other hand soothingly over the mother's forehead. "Sssh," she said.

Mancioni watched her wonderingly. "She'll be all right, Sister, won't she be all right?"

"Of course she'll be all right. Don't you worry."

"I got to go," he said slowly. "I'm not going to be here. I got a job."

The nun smiled encouragingly. "That's all right," she said. "When you come back, why, you'll have a brand-new child."

He heard his wife breathing heavily, irregularly, on the bed, and fought for the courage to face her. "Sister," he said finally, "you think maybe I better not go on the job? Maybe I better stay here, outside, so I'm here when she—when she has the trouble?"

"No, no, she'll be better off with you away. Never you fear." She smiled brightly, and Mancioni stood up and carefully buttoned his pea jacket. Then he turned quickly to the bed and away, and said, "Good-by, Mary."

"Good-by, Lou," she muttered. "Go away."

"Good-by," said the nurse cheerfully. "I'll bet you it's a boy."

3

The Governor's great political asset was his head. It was long, broad at the forehead and the cheekbones, tapering to a thin jaw and a strong chin. He was fifty-three years old, and his hair was a fine gray-white, with three forward strokes of darker gray, above his high and delicately wrinkled forehead. His nose was long and straight and thin, and perfectly symmetrical; his eyes were blue, but a deeper blue than common; his eyebrows were light and gray. His ears, long and large, saved him from prettiness; but despite the ears he was quite the handsomest man that had ever run for office in the state. It helped.

It was also, all of it, rather recent: there were photograph albums, remains of a rich man's hobby and passion for his only child, which showed Billy Clelland as a thin-faced,

nervous boy, eyes too large for his head, and then a long-boned, rather sullen adolescent, and then the college student in the floppy sweater, one year thin, the next fat, then thin again, with a bony forehead and a skull laid bare by the barber. His father bought him a car, an extravagant Twin Six, and for seven months he scarcely used it. Then he disappeared one Christmas vacation, and returned ten days later with nearly three thousand miles on the speedometer; he had, he said, been driving around. For twenty years he seemed fated and fitted for the profession of rich man's son—his father's profession, banking, being eternally out of the question—and then, very suddenly, he found a trade of his own, teaching, and everything changed. He acquired discipline. He studied subjects and teachers, carefully, and accents in the voice and methods of control. He had stooped all his life, and bent his shoulders forward; now he straightened up, gradually, worked on his posture and his walk, his tailoring and his way of wearing clothes, all the externals of appearance. These had become habit beyond discipline: a way of bending his overly long arms, of sitting down straight, of carrying his chin forward and high. He walked firmly, on the balls of his feet and the centers of the heels, even here in the football stadium, facing row on row of crew-cut heads.

The Governor was not out of place in the stadium; he knew it well. It had been built twenty-seven years before, during his first term as an instructor at the University, his first year back from Oxford, back home. It had been dedicated—"to peace and education and wholesome sport"—on the day he received from Constable in London the notice of acceptance of his first book: *The Last Conservative, a*

Biography of Edmund Burke. He had seen more than a hundred football games within these concrete walls, and one preposterous graduation ceremony, when the star halfback was also the valedictorian, and the chairman of the Senate Committee on Education suggested the existence of a great opportunity . . .

He grinned at the memory, then stopped on the last step to end the grin—you exit laughing, you enter straight. As he stopped, Frank Reed came abreast of him; the Governor looked up apologetically at his tall, thin assistant, then down to the draped box by the playing field.

“Did Iris get here early?” he said. “Or are we late again?”

“I think we’re late,” Reed said.

“Then we’d better get up there quickly, before she sees us and decides she’s mad.”

“Yes.”

The Governor smiled at Iris as he neared the box, and smiled again at Reed: they had both, at different times, been students in Professor Billy Clelland’s Famous Course in the History of Political Theory, Reed very eager and anxious to be liked, Iris precocious and confident. He had introduced them to each other, and he had dedicated to them and their six-year-old son, his godson, then a six-month infant, his most recent book: *Peel and Disraeli, the Ethics of Tory Revolution*. Thank God no voters ever read it. And Reed, of course, had brought him into politics; a bright young lawyer and leader in the Youth Club, Reed had pushed Clelland’s name before the caucus when the party so desperately needed at least the appearance of an honest man. Looking back on that day, the Governor found

it remarkable that he had not been surprised at the news. He was, of course, a student of politics, a proven academic administrator, an effective speaker—but until that day he had never consciously thought of public office, and Reed had never mentioned the idea. Then, suddenly, the nomination was offered, and he felt only a great surge of confidence, a new proof of discipline, a certainty of election; and he had won easily, running 300,000 votes ahead of his weak ticket; and got re-elected by the greatest majority in the state's history; and now was mentioned, quite prominently, for the presidency, and felt again the confidence, the discipline, the capability. . . .

"Hello, Iris," the Governor said, and took her hand. "How fine you look."

Iris Reed was a small, thin, cheerful person with a round, cheerful face, dark-rimmed glasses and short, perfectly kept, lacquered black hair; she did look fine. She was carefully and expensively turned out, every day, always neat and tidy, and she kept by abstruse, dull and hidden labor the girlish air she needed—without it, she had decided, her appearance would soon descend to the kindly, round placidity of Jewish middle age. She believed in her appearance, considered it no more than competence in the woman's job, which was to be neat and attractive and bright for herself, her husband and her friends. She admired the Governor, though once she had liked him more. "I'm fine, Billy," she said, "but I wish you'd find some other flattery to throw at my head."

"But you always do look fine," the Governor said. "It's just the truth."

"Hmm. Well, how are you?"

"The usual. Weary but still working. Did young Billy send a message?"

"Yes, he did. He said that, seeing as this is his father's birthday, he expects your attendance at our house after the game."

The Governor studied the state flag at the end of the stadium, and frowned. Beside him Reed laughed. "To hell with it," he said. "Your duties don't preclude taking an evening off to celebrate once a year on my birthday. Besides, I've made a complete digest of the PUC report and written the veto message on the sewer authority authorization bill, and all you've got to do is sign your name."

"I suppose," the Governor said, shaking his head. "Sometimes I ponder the constitutional question of who runs this state—you or the legislature."

"Both of you ruling powers can now sit down," Iris said, pulling her feet under her chair to let her husband by. He sat down beside her and crossed his tweeded legs; on the other side the Governor gently lowered himself onto the cushion that had been carefully centered on the slats of his chair by Sergeant Gordon Smith of the state police. There was a blast of trumpets from outside, and the college band, all red and white, swung itself with rehearsed precision around the open end of the stadium.

"Wonder what's happened to old Hofmann," the Governor said, and sighed, and reached into the inside breast pocket of his overcoat, took out a folded, three-page typescript, and began to read. "Be with you in a minute," he said.

"You know that speech by now, Billy," Iris said.

"Maybe I do," the Governor said slowly, jabbing his

finger at a point of emphasis and reading on. "Isn't my sort of thing, and I'd like to be sure I've got it right." He flipped the top page off, nodded his head at the first sentence on the second page, and skimmed on. Then he dropped the papers back in his pocket and settled comfortably to watch the band, which was swinging toward them, in the same wheel, around the fifty-yard line.

The trumpets screamed the end of the band's formation, and the drum majorette turned to face the stands, which dutifully applauded. Then the drummer hit a fast roll, and the boys yelled "'Ray for Billy!" and the Governor waved to them as they broke in a run for their seats five boxes behind him.

"Bad management," the Governor said. "It's not my birthday. Now, where the devil is Hofmann?"

"By the way," Iris said, "speaking of them what is thirty-five years old, brother Irving's in town."

The home team burst up the concrete runway to their right, and the Governor studied the boys as they somersaulted from the edge of the turf fifteen yards into the field. "Oh?" he said. "Will Irving be with us tonight?"

"No."

The Governor went over the first paragraph of his speech, quickly, in his head, grabbing at one obligation to avoid another, then locked his hands, took a deep breath, and accepted the problem as he always did. "Would you rather I didn't come tonight, so Irving could be with you?"

"Don't be stupid, Billy," Iris snapped.

"It isn't stupid, Iris," the Governor said, still looking at the field. "He's your brother, and I'm just your husband's boss."

"Oh, for God's sake," Reed said.

"No," the Governor said. He looked at Reed, then at Iris, and there was a moment's pause, with everyone knowing what was to come next, and hating it. The Governor turned back to the football field, where the boys were charging and passing and kicking; he was not obliged to look at Iris while he said it. "How's Helen?"

"She's fine, Billy," Iris said immediately. "I saw her Tuesday. She asked about you."

"And the boy?"

"He's fine, too. He'd like to see you." She put her hand on the Governor's arm, making him turn toward her, and smiled. "So would Helen."

"Jesus!" said Reed. "Look at that boy kick the ball!"

"I wish I could get out to see her," the Governor said. "I wish I could. And the boy."

Her hand was still on his arm; she put a little pressure behind it. "It's a terrible pity, Billy," she said. "Helen knows you'll be out when it's possible."

Squirming on the next chair, Reed said, "Here comes Hofmann, late as usual—ten to two."

The padded boys trotted off the field intently to their dressing rooms, and boys in striped ties came past the Governor's box with a microphone. They began to set it up, with much pulling of cords, on the edge of the field in front of the box.

"Hardly pays to sit down," President Hofmann said, panting slightly. He sat down, and chewed briefly on the inside of his wrinkled cheek. "Speech all ready, Billy?"

"We-ell, yes. It's not one of our best efforts."

"I thought it was pretty good," Reed said plaintively, "under the circumstances."

"Oh, I'm not complaining, Frank. But what circumstances!"

The striped ties left the microphone, and one of them came respectfully to the box. "All set, sir," he told Hofmann, and Hofmann introduced him to the Governor, who stood up and bent forward to shake hands, and stayed on his feet.

"Might as well go right now," he said.

"Yes, sir," said the boy. "It's all set."

Hofmann rose laboriously as the boy unlatched the front gate to the box. Two state troopers ran from the runway to plant themselves beside the gate, and Hofmann led the Governor to the microphone.

"Billy!" the band yelled again, and the Governor waved again as the crowd applauded.

The boy unscrewed the shaft of the microphone and raised it slightly; the speaker system screamed at the crowd. Then Hofmann hoisted a hand for silence, and got it. "We're not going to hold up the game," he said, "but this is one of the first times in more than a year that our beloved Professor Clelland—I beg your pardon!—Governor Clelland . . ."

In the box Reed was whispering with Iris. "Why the hell do you two have to talk about Helen every time you see each other?"

"I can't help it, honey. He always starts it."

"He never brings it up with me."

"Well, he wouldn't," she said, "because you don't count."

"I want to know. I really do."

"He's got to prove it, Frank, that's why. Because I'm her sister. Helen believes him, and I believe him, and he knows that—but he also knows it's not easy to believe. Sure, he's still in love with her. But he's got to prove it."

"He can't see her now. Not safe. Not if he wants to be president."

"Don't be cynical."

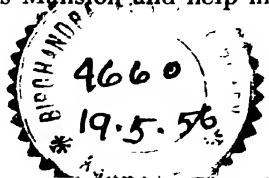
He started. "My God, honey. It's nothing to be ashamed of, that he wants to be president."

"Maybe," she said.

The Governor was standing before the mike now, smiling up at the rows of students, the rows of graduates, the rows of voters. He was into his speech. It was not a good speech, but in the nature of the animal it couldn't be good. He was not dissatisfied.

"Ninety-two years ago the sons of our great state and the sons of Virginia were fighting each other along the Potomac, volunteers all, each convinced of the honor of his cause. Today we fight on a more fitting field, and the stakes of victory are those more suited to brothers. The memories of this encounter will surely be pleasant ones, and we shall not again know bitterness against each other.

"It is our University's first contest with the University of Virginia; but we will meet again next year, and in years to come. With all respect to brotherhood and our Southern friends, I hope we win 'em all. On this game itself I have a little wager with the Governor of Virginia—a barrel of seed corn from our agricultural laboratories against a Virginia ham. And when we win it I want our team to come to the Governor's Mansion and help me eat the pig."



The cheers were dutiful, but something more. Iris looked up at the applauding students with some horror. "What a man won't do," she said wonderingly, "when he wants to be president."

4

The streetcar labored up the hill toward the stadium with the last of the crowd, a few minutes late, the men thumbing their watches, the wives placid in tardiness, the children nervously irritable, anxious, impatient, waving banners into adult faces, listening for the roar that would mean a kickoff lost. At the back of the bus, looking down on the crowd with the air of bishops at a dogtrack, stood Lou Mancioni and Chris Kraus. They were riding to the stadium on business, not pleasure; they had a car to steal, to carry them out of the state to a robbery, and back. Neither of them was in a frivolous mood. Mancioni's hand rested on the heavy-caliber revolver in the pocket of his pea jacket; he had never carried a gun before, and he knew, somehow, that it was a crime. Kraus kept his large, hairy hands at his sides, and twitched them, slightly, with anticipatory cunning: his mind was fixed on the evening ahead.

In the stadium a cleated foot kicked a football, and a cheer carried through the quiet streets; a mixture of sighs and childish protests filled the clattering streetcar. Kraus did not hear either sound. He was a dedicated criminal; dishonesty was his living, and he was a craftsman; he was proud of himself. He stood a knife's edge under six feet tall, and he was heavy—a little flabby, too, after eight months out of jail. His hair was blond and curly, and getting thin near the crown. His face was coarse, with rough, ugly

skin, lush blond eyebrows, small black eyes, and the button nose and heavy jowls of his German ancestry. He had served his first jail sentence at fifteen, and now he was thirty-two; he had spent thirteen of the intervening years in prison. His record showed five convictions and twenty-three arrests, two on suspicion of homicide. He had been found guilty of assault with a knife; of selling numbers; of bookmaking; of armed robbery; and again of bookmaking. The last conviction, because of his record, had cost him nearly a year's freedom. He knew how it had happened: it had been rung on him by The Boss, after The Boss found him holding back bets.

"I had a small business," he had told Mancioni three days before, nuzzling into a sixth, sorrowful beer: Mancioni, who was five years younger and dark and thin, who had never been in jail but could not read or write, which was worse. "It wasn't costing him much, that son of a bitch, he could've let me keep it. Every book holds back a little. He knew how much time I'd get when he put the cops on me—like I wasn't paying shares in the protection every week. He knew I had a record, the son of a bitch."

And again, over the eighth beer: "I don't know how he got me, the son of a bitch. I wasn't no friggin greenhorn. I never held out just the long shots—some favorites, some long shots, maybe a hundred bucks a day out of a yard and a half play. It don't make sense that he caught me—on a lousy three-dollar bet he sent a runner out to the end of town to lay, the son of a bitch. Checking up on everybody, like a friggin Jew. I'll get him, though, the son of a bitch. I'll get him if I got to kill him first."

Kraus' plans to get The Boss were actually older than

his grudge; they went back more than two years, to the time when he was employed as blackjack dealer in the big casino across the state line. There, in the private bank behind the gambling hall, Kraus had seen stacks of bills grow every night, until on Saturdays the safe held packages to a total of sixty or seventy thousand dollars. It was money for the taking, for the right man; and after such a haul a man could get away—away to San Francisco, or even Mexico, someplace safe. But the plans were risky, and Kraus was riskier still; he liked to shoot people, he was a talker, and he could not be trusted to make the split. He had gone down his list of friends, from skilled criminals to punks, and found nobody willing to share the gamble. Then he had met Mancioni, who was wolfing his lunch in a bar near the railroad station. The first beer had won Mancioni's affection; the second, his loyalty; the third, his devotion. So Kraus had gambled: Mancioni might be stupid, but he could drive a car, and hold a gun; and Kraus could do the rest.

The streetcar rocked around the last turn and pulled up just beyond the gates to the stadium. Waiting for it were a dozen vendors with buttons and pennants and cotton tigers. Late already, many of the passengers bought; even Kraus, leaving the car at the end of the impatient procession, stopped, grinned, and flipped out a quarter for a small Virginia pennant.

"Luck!" he said to Mancioni. "Hurray for our side!"

Some of the passengers turned to look at him; the children, when they saw the banner, with concentrated hate; the men with pleasant tolerance—for two days the town had been happy host to a crowd of rich drunk Virginians.

Kraus could pass, briefly, as a visiting Virginian; three liquor-store robberies in two months had brought him nearly two thousand dollars and The College Shop's finest wide pin-stripe suit. Pulling Mancioni with him, he followed the crowd to the ticket stall, then turned quickly aside.

"Okay," he said. "We work."

"Chris," Mancioni said, a step behind, "when, what time you think we get back?"

"How the hell do I know? Try to case it around ten and pull the job around eleven, so we can get back here about one, before they get the cars off the roads and start looking for us. But maybe it don't look like there's money in the till at eleven—then we got to wait. I can't make you no promises, Lou."

"It's just my wife, Chris. You know about my wife. I told you about it. And maybe the baby comes tonight. I wanna be there when the baby comes, if I can be there."

Kraus took one long step forward, then turned on his heel and faced Mancioni. "Look," he said. "She don't need you at no hospital. You're coming back tonight with a fifth of what we get—maybe five, ten thousand bucks, more than you ever got in your whole life. If you don't have the guts for it, just tell me, and I'll quit quicker'n you will. I don't want to hear no complaining."

Mancioni shrank backwards, bewildered. "I didn't mean nothing, Chris. Don't get after me that way, Chris. I ain't scared, I tell you true I ain't scared. Just worried about Mary, in the hospital and the baby coming."

Kraus looked down at him soberly for a moment, then grinned. "Sure," he said. "It's okay, Lou. You'd better just stop thinking, and you'll do fine."

The street away from the stadium was narrow and red with the leaves of fall. Trees crowded together along the sidewalk, and each of the quiet, thirty-year-old homes had its neat hedge and lawn and driveway. Most of the people who lived on this street were in some way connected with the University, and now they were—happily or perforce—safely in the stadium. Cars were parked so tightly against each other that only a few of the driveways were clear; and except for an occasional part-time maid, loafing away the working day at a screened doorway, the street held no witnesses. But it was not quiet enough for Kraus. He followed the street nearly half a mile, looking up and down the side streets, until he found a dead end that ran into a vacant lot. In the lot, safely away from the nearest house—which was empty, anyway—were half a dozen cars. Kraus stationed Mancioni at the entrance, walked quickly around the cars, and picked a four-year-old, black Pontiac.

He took a short black stick from the inside breast pocket of his new jacket, ran his finger over the diamond point at the end, and with four busy gestures cut a glass panel from the window of a rear door. He pushed the panel onto the seat, reached his hand through the hole and opened the door. He rolled down the rear window, reached over the front seat, opened the front door and quickly stepped around. With a small screw driver he removed the ignition switch. He ripped the wires at the end, touched them together with the screw driver, and nodded cheerfully as the battery turned the motor.

“Get back here,” he hissed to Mancioni, who slowly turned and lumbered to the car. Kraus touched the wires again, and put his foot on the accelerator. The car started.

Kraus guided it gently from the lot, down the street and away to the main road to the south.

5

The press box was on the west side of the stadium, raised above the concrete arches and thrust forward by a complicated system of steel girders. Reporters reached it by a steel staircase that rose safely through the bowels of the arch, then shakily above the seats, unprotected and forever ready to dance in a good wind. The front of the box was a series of windows; directly behind them was a long wooden table, and behind the table a long wooden bench. Two tiers of tables and benches rose in steps to the rear, where there was a relatively new glass-fronted broadcasting booth and a series of small girders planned to strengthen the roof for television cameras, and so far, as the reporters gloomily admitted, successful.

It was not a comfortable press box, nor a popular one. Its sides were corrugated tin on the outside, and corrugated tin on the inside—two layers, though no member of the working press would ever admit it. There was no heat, no water. The windows leaked. So did the roof. There was no bathroom. The tin walls made a telegraph key, usually unobjectionable, sound like a typewriter, and a typewriter sound like a machine gun.

Today there were other, more liquid, noises: the Virginia University Alumni Association had sent up to the boys, as an offering for spectacular prose, a case of Kentucky sour mash bourbon and a box of paper cups. By the time the second period was half over, more than half the case had vanished into twenty-seven dry throats, and the student

spotter for the radio announcer had been stretched out in the sun on the roof in hopes of eventual recovery. One bottle had been reserved for the telegrapher, on whose accurate reporting depended the fate of nations, and he had agreed upon that payment to protect everybody in the house. Meanwhile the press box watched the game with great enjoyment, and cheered enthusiastically for Virginia.

Harry O'Connor, having photographed from the field the first touchdowns of both teams, poked his nose and his camera into the box as a Virginia end caught a thirty-yard pass, and he was only partly surprised to step into a shattering volley of journalistic cheers. The story of the liquor had dripped quickly through some psychic filter to the photographers on the field, and though O'Connor would have come up in any event to get his panoramic view of the crowd and god's-eye view of a tackle, he had come early to make sure of the dividend. Now he stood in the doorway, the sun on his back, his square suitcase in his strong fist, and eyed the celebration.

"Looks like the Arthur Godfrey program," he muttered.

"Hello, Harry, me boy," said the sports editor of the *Chronicle*. "Nothing like a familiar face."

The other locals turned and waved briefly, and the Virginians took a respectful look. O'Connor was a known quantity, a consistent prize winner and one of the most highly paid newspaper photographers in the country. The talent was hidden behind a thin, sharp, lined Irish face and a double-breasted, royal-blue, pin-stripe suit—but it was there. Everybody knew it was there, and most of his contemporaries envied him for that, for his salary, for his

demonstrated independence, and for his wife—a long, cool, lovely, stupid, faithful redhead.

He stepped in, ambled down the three steps to the front row, and set his camera on the table beside Wally Harris' typewriter. He looked down at the paper in the roller and read the lead paragraph of the next day's *Sports Chronicle*:

On the cleat-scarred turf of Memorial Shtadium (we were all a little drunk) the doughty warriors of Virgini.. yesterday revenged themselves for the defeats of the Wilderness campaign. They used many tactics—cavalry charges around the ends, rock-crushing drives over the tackles, rebel yells in the huddles—but most of all they used a couple of transplanted Pennsylvanians, Gino Cervelli and Jack Kolaski. . . .

"Score's tied," O'Connor said gently.

"I know, I know," Harris said. "But I won't get so pried I can't change it. What other profession does a man have to work on Saturday?"

"Photography." O'Connor pushed aside the big Speed-Graphic, took the 35-millimeter from his suitcase, shoved open the window and leaned dangerously out to get his angle. The press-box noises faded as the Virginia players came out of their huddle; O'Connor tensed for the series of pictures that would tell more about the Virginians than the editor's story or Harris' column. He was a nervous photographer; he lunged forward slightly as he took each picture; watching him work from the press box was like watching a tipsy window cleaner. Harris held his breath and marked the progress of the play by O'Connor's lurching backside. When he returned his attention to the field the referee was trotting the ball in from the side line to place

it down just about where it had been before the moment's action.

O'Connor, breathing heavily, pulled himself back into the press box. "Son of a bitch," he said feelingly. "One of these days I'm going to tear down this end of the table with my bare hands."

"We don't like it any more than you do," Harris said. "Why don't you take your pictures off the roof, so we'd only see you sailing past?"

"Get blown off," O'Connor said. He peered over the edge, measuring straight down. "And cut my camera hand on Gus Forester's beer bottle."

"Okay. Have a drink."

"Not yet. Got about six more plays to get, playing it safe. A really good shot for this game is Virginia papers please copy, and maybe *This Week*. Moola."

Virginia was out of its huddle again, but O'Connor was resting. At the other end of the press box a Virginia writer was staring fixedly down onto the field. "Git it to Cervelli, Cervelli, that's it—now round the end, Cervelli—little wider, maybe—cut here—oooooh, they smeared him, they smeared Cervelli, poor little fella. . . ."

O'Connor sat up on the table and looked over the reporters. "Got news for you," he said. "You're going to have a visitor. The Moss. I saw him downstairs."

"What blew him into town?" said the oldest inhabitant, a white-haired cartoonist from the *Standard*. "Did he make Europe too hot to hold him?"

"Dunno," O'Connor said. "I suspect dirty work at the crossroads by Mr. Clarence Emerson Ransom, your boss and mine, the friend of the working executive. Irving's

nothing if he's not a hatchet man—Nieman Fellow or no. By the way, coming to the party?"

"Wouldn't miss it," said the white-haired cartoonist.

"Good." O'Connor lifted himself from the table and hung his camera around his neck. "Any of you boys," he added to the room in general, "who can still stand are invited out to Forty-Seven Pine Road tonight at nine. More free booze."

By now the Virginians were across midfield and down on the home thirty-nine. They were huddling quickly, and O'Connor had just time to set his elbows firmly against the window frame before the play began. He caught the quarterback's protection forming as the boy danced backward to safety, the ends darting for the side lines, Cervelli cutting away and then in over the center, the quarterback leaping for the pass—

Behind O'Connor the press-box door had opened and Irving Moss—a middle-sized man, middle-youthful, middle-aged, with light brown hair, and a middling paunch and a round face and gray-rimmed glass—had paused in his nervous, unceasing progress to observe his colleagues at work. Swinging his eye slowly around the room, he had come at last to O'Connor's lurching legs. He bellowed a bull-voiced greeting.

"I'd know that ass anywhere! Jesus, Harry, drunk again!"

As he spoke the quarterback threw the ball; O'Connor, his timing off, lurched a little too violently, felt his perch shiver beneath his toes, suffered an instant's adrenal blast of fear and dropped his camera, which slammed to the end of its cord, jerked at his neck, and by impairing his balance

actually put him in some danger. Before he could totter off, however, his hands caught on the window and he heaved himself to less dangerous quarters. On the field, Cervelli dropped the ball.

O'Connor rested for a moment, facing the field, then shrugged his shoulders and turned toward the doorway. "Irving," he said, "if Cervelli catches that ball, and you louse up a five-hundred-dollar series, you are a dead Moss."

Moss turned to Harris. "Did he catch the ball, Wally?" "No."

"That's good." Moss waved to the few reporters he knew, gave a "Hi, boss," to the *Chronicle* sports editor and a "Good to see you, Sam" to the cartoonist. Then he stepped down the side aisle to O'Connor and solemnly shook hands.

"Haven't seen you in more than four years, Harry. Or you either, Wally. How's it been?"

"Wa-al," Harris said thoughtfully, "as I reckellect, four years ago Andy Hardy wuz president and Phoebe Hearst wuz raizin cane down in Tombstone. Been beet-sugar and a lotta new faces since then, ay-yah. What the hell are you asking questions?"

"Just curious. O'Connor here I keep up with through the international edition of *Life* and the Treasury Department's list of high-salaried executives. Otherwise I'm a stranger in town."

"Got nothing to do tonight," O'Connor suggested.

"That's right."

"Come on out to Forty-Seven Pine Road. Big party. Lots of new faces. *Female* faces."

“Still pinching bottoms, Harry?”

O'Connor grinned. He and Moss had started off together on the *Chronicle*, twelve years before, and working as a team they had pulled themselves seven spectacular stories in four years. Then Moss had been sent to Washington to spy on a local congressman who had through a stupid piece of rudeness risen to number one on publisher Clarence Ransom's comprehensive SOB list. Moss had done a series of twelve pre-election pieces to murder the congressman, and had gone on to a series on the House itself. That September he had won one of the Nieman Fellowships for reporters, and taken a year's postgraduate work at Harvard. The New York *Herald Tribune*, ever grabbing for talent, had picked him out of Harvard with Ransom's consent, and sent him to Europe: a year on the London desk; nine months on the Rome desk; then to the Associated Press in Paris. “What are you doing in this rural slum?” O'Connor said.

“I'm on leave from the AP—figured I needed a rest after all that Europe. I'm not particularly genuine, Harry, but I'm not such a phony that I can play expatriate the rest of my life. So I've got family here. Does that explain it?”

“It might,” Harris said. “There's been an alternative suggestion advanced.”

A howl from the crowd announced a Virginia fumble on the seven-yard line. The telegraph key clattered from the middle of the press box, and typewriters raised their peculiar echoes from the tin walls. Harris noted the play on a pad beside his typewriter and scowled at his lead. Then he swung back to Moss and made a popping sound with his mouth.

"Well," Moss said, "I won't deny I got a letter from Everybody's Friend."

"What does he want?" O'Connor said. "A job on the Governor?"

"He might. I'm having dinner with him tonight, so I'll get the details then. Sounds like a job one might enjoy."

"You're wrong," O'Connor said, "but I don't want to argue it. Can you come tonight anyway?"

"What kind of party is it?"

"You remember—liquor, girls, high and mighty, low and friendly. Very intellectual."

"Then, as they say, you'll have another guest coming. By the way, how's Gloria?"

"Unchanged," O'Connor said cheerfully.

"No kids?"

"Not Gloria."

"Anybody else?" Moss said, and winced, watching his thoughts back home from abroad.

O'Connor noted the wince and whistled. "I don't know about you," he said, "but my conscience is clean. I scrub it with Brillo every night. You leave yourself some little bambino over in Rome?"

"No, no," Moss said. "And none of that." At the end of the stadium the clock showed two minutes to play in the half; on the field a Virginia time-out was ending, and the players were forming in position on the twelve-yard line.

"Want to catch this play," O'Connor said, and leaned gingerly toward the window. "See you tonight."

"Right." Moss turned and waved to the press box in a

kingly manner. "See you boys tonight," he said, and clumped up the aisle and out.

"Irving," said Harris, to nobody in particular, "has changed. Too many years with the Wiener schnitzel."

O'Connor grunted from outside the window. On the field the ball passed back in the single wing to Oliver Stanley, the local hero, and the Virginia tackle, double-teamed, fell on his face. Stanley put a delicate cleat on the tackle's neck and stepped out into the clear, racing up field with only the safety to stop him. . . .

On the windy staircase from the press box Irving Moss stopped to watch the play, then moved on as the safety swung into Stanley and knocked him out of bounds. He heard an unmistakable, counter-tenor scream from directly under his feet as Gus Forester yelled, "Looky! Looky there!"

Stanley pulled himself up from the grass before the Governor's box, and then, startled, looked again at the Governor. Irving Moss, Gus Forester, most of the press box and some sixty thousand voters and potential voters followed the startled stare; and noted that Governor Billy Clelland was asleep.

Chapter Two

"I SAW it all, I saw it all!" Billy Reed said as his mother opened the door to her modern six-room apartment, which faced over the state park to the state capitol. "I saw it all!" he said again as his father and the Governor entered, and then he grabbed a secure handhold on the Governor's trousers. "Uncle Billy! Uncle Billy! I saw it all on the television!"

"That's more than Uncle Billy can say," Iris commented.

"Did you miss the game, Uncle Billy?" the boy asked.

"No, I was there."

The maid, a large Canadian Negro—in Iris' home everything was a little unusual—came sauntering out of the kitchen and took the Governor's coat. "Hello, Manitoba," he said.

"Hello, Mr. Governor." She smiled. "Brandy and soda?"

"Not too strong."

"That's right, Mr. Governor," she said delightedly. "Martini, mad'm?"

"Go ahead and make them, Manny. Scotch for Mr. Reed."

"Make it a double scotch, Manny," Reed said from around the corner, in the living room, where he was unwrapping a package. "Birthday boy, you know."

"Yes, sir."

The Governor bent over, gently detached young Billy's fist from his pants, held on to the boy's hand and walked him into the living room. He settled down on a walnut-and-foam-rubber armchair by the window, and lifted the boy to his knee, not without effort.

"What did Mummy mean when she said you didn't see it all?"

"Mummy meant trouble," the Governor said with a stern glance at Iris, who was studiously picking an invisible bit of fluff from the carpet.

"Oh," the boy said.

"You know how it is, Billy," the Governor said, bouncing him once. "When you're governor, there are lots of things you have to do, even if it means missing part of the game."

"Sure," the boy said sympathetically, and then, "Do you have to be governor all the time?"

"Well, no. Sometimes you can just sit around and drink brandy and soda, just as though you had nothing in the world to do."

"Can you tell a story, too?" the boy asked shrewdly. His mother, beside Reed on the couch, pulled the last layers of tissue from a framed early seventeenth-century map of a Northwest Passage through the Great Lakes—the Governor's birthday gift to Reed. She gave her son a sharp look,

then turned to the Governor and said, "Thanks. It's awfully handsome. Now all you have to do is tell the scion a story."

"A new one?" the Governor suggested.

"Yes," the boy said. "A new one."

"All right," the Governor said, thinking fast, "it's about birthdays. It happened in a time long, long ago, in a country far, far away, and it's about a boy who lived in a little village with jungle on three sides and fields on one side, and tigers all around. He lived in a little grass hut with his mother and his father and his two baby sisters, and they ate meat from the animals of the jungle, and corn from the fields, and sometimes fish from the river that ran through the fields, but so far away that it was a full day's walk for a man to get there, and a full day's walk back. So they didn't have fish very often, and sometimes, when there were lots of tigers around the village, they didn't have fish at all.

"Now Alfred, the boy, was a very bright little boy, and he soon understood that he and his mother and his father and his two baby sisters had fish for dinner only when the tigers weren't around, and he loved fish. Also, he knew that the tigers were bad animals, and killed the other animals of the jungle, just as though they were men—and sometimes even killed the men of the village. And, because he loved fish and hated tigers, Alfred asked his father one day whether he could have a spear, a man's spear, a hunter's spear, and go out in the jungle and kill tigers.

"Well, his father was horrified by the very idea—that is, he didn't like it. He told Alfred that only men could hunt tigers, because tigers were very dangerous, and that Alfred

wasn't a man yet, because he had only eight birthdays—he was only eight years old. 'When you have a few more birthdays,' his father said, 'then, Alfred, you can hunt tigers.' ”

Reed and Iris were sitting still on the couch now, the map unwrapped but waiting on the boy's pleasure. Manitoba had no such scruples. She carried in a large brass tray with the drinks, and lifted the Governor's brandy and soda onto the end table. "Better test it," she said, "and see if it's right."

The Governor sipped at his drink and nodded, smiling. Then young Billy, who was a rather patient child, raised his head. "Did Alfred go hunting tigers?"

"Not," said the Governor, "yet. He had only eight birthdays, you see. He went on living just the way he had, working in the fields with the corn while the hunters went out into the jungle and hunted meat, and tigers. The field Alfred worked in was pretty near the jungle, and sometimes, when his work was almost done in the afternoon—or when it got so hot that he couldn't work—he would go up to a little hill, a hill covered with tall grass, and look over at the jungle and count his birthdays.

"It wasn't an ordinary hill. It was Alfred's hill, and when the wind blew, and the grass waved around in the wind, it talked to Alfred, just as though it were alive, and a real person. Usually, because it was a good hill, it told him to go back to work. But sometimes it told him about hunting tigers, because it was a big enough hill to see into the jungle, and it knew how the men of the village hunted the tiger.

"Everybody made a fuss over Alfred on his ninth birth-

day, and he thought that maybe their fuss meant he was now a man, a hunter who could go into the jungle and kill tigers. But he was afraid to ask his father, because he knew that if his father was ready to have him hunt, his father would say something, and not wait for him to ask. But that afternoon there was a big wind blowing, and he went up to his hill in the wind and asked the hill. The hill said, quickly because the rain was coming and it didn't want Alfred to get wet, 'No, you can't hunt this year. But it won't be long now.'

"Well, another year went by, and Alfred's tenth birthday came. This time, somehow, his father and his mother and his three baby sisters—there was another one now—didn't make so much of a fuss over him, and he couldn't understand why. He was a little sad. So he went up to his hill early, near lunchtime, and he asked the hill, 'Why doesn't anybody care that I'm ten years old?'

"The hill said, 'But everyone cares.'

"Alfred said, 'But nobody did anything. I didn't hardly get a present. And it's my birthday.' And he was so sad he was nearly ready to cry. But he didn't cry, which was a good thing for Alfred, because if he had cried he would have got the hill all wet, and the hill wouldn't have talked to him again that day, and he would have had to wait another year. But he didn't cry.

"The grass gave a long rustle of relief, and whispered, 'Go home. You are a man now and you may hunt tigers.'

"Alfred ran home, but none of his family was there. He looked for them all around their hut, and then he went inside again. And there, by the wall, right next to the door so he wouldn't see it too soon, was a shiny new spear with

a little tag on it. He picked up the tag, and it said, 'To Alfred.'

"Alfred was so happy he danced, but then he remembered he was a man, and he stopped dancing. He took the little spear—it was just his size—and stepped out into the paths of the village, which were empty, because everybody was staying out of his way. He walked into the jungle—the first time he had ever been in the jungle, but he was a man now, so he wasn't a bit afraid—and before he had gone ten steps a big, toothy tiger came down a big, scaly tree and began to prowl toward him.

"Nobody had told the tiger, you see. The tiger thought Alfred was a little boy, and if the truth must out—well, the local communists were right and the tiger did eat little boys, even though the communists said it. Alfred wasn't afraid, because he was too important to be afraid. He stepped toward the tiger and raised his little spear, and then the tiger caught a smell from him, a smell of a man, of a hunter. The tiger was frightened, and he began to back away, but Alfred gave a little run, and lifted his spear high, and because he was a man he wasn't afraid to ram the spear right between the tiger's shoulders, and he cried 'Olé' and then all the men of the village came out of the trees. And that night everybody had fish for supper. And that is the end of the story."

There was a moment's silence while the boy digested it. Then he said, "It was all because Alfred didn't cry, wasn't it, Uncle Billy?"

"Well," the Governor said uncomfortably, "not all, no."

"That's good," the boy said, "because I know about crying. But what does the story mean?"

"Well," the Governor said again. "In the first place it means that birthdays are very important. Your father has a birthday today, and that makes him so important he can give orders to the Governor of the state, take the Governor clean away from his work. And you had a birthday in August, and that made you important enough to go to school. And in this village, going to school is a little like hunting the tiger, though you haven't quite reached the tiger stage yet. You will."

The meaning had got a little beyond the boy now; he looked to his parents, who smiled at him encouragingly. "Is that all it means?" he said.

"Not quite," the Governor said with a grin at his hosts. "It also means that fish is good to eat, even though I don't much like it myself, and that there's no point going into politics unless you're really a preacher."

"Oh," the boy said, knowing that now the story was really over. He climbed down from the Governor's knee and walked over to his model fire truck with real rubber wheels, and began pushing it along the carpet. Suddenly he looked up and said, "Thank you, Uncle Billy." He was an admirable child.

"Thank you very much, Uncle Billy," said his mother, picking up the map. "Look," she said, turning to the boy, "what Uncle Billy brought us."

The Governor hid behind his glass, and the boy paused to examine the map, which was an accurate brown-and-red drawing of the eastern Great Lakes and a handsome but fantastic guess at Lake Superior and the Pacific Ocean. Iris looked down at it over the frame and encouraged the boy with her hands. The boy, who had never cared for

drawing, saw that his mother was pleased. "It's all right," he said.

The Governor relaxed approvingly. "Take the lesson," he said. "Billy has a sense of proportion. Now hang it on the wall or put it in the closet, and look at it when you feel like it."

Iris began studying her room frantically, sure that she could never find the right height on the right place on the right wall, that the map, which she had so admired in the Governor's office, would never look right in her house. She sighed at her own stupidity, but she continued to search.

"Proportion!" the Governor said professorially. "Proportion is all—in life, Iris, in art, in politics!"

"Yes," Reed said, watching his wife with amusement, "but sometimes you've got to tell a story, too."

2

Kraus and Mancioni got thirty-five miles out of the capital before stopping, and then they filled the tank at a large gas station outside a small city, and Mancioni took the wheel. They drove due south, at a moderate speed, along the main roads—"Nobody knows we stole this car yet, see?"—over the state line and some distance beyond their destination—"Even if they get the alarm out interstate, nobody'll be looking for us coming north." Finally they arrived at a city fifty miles from their target and parked the car in the municipal parking lot. Kraus screwed the ignition back into its socket, then stood himself and his partner an afternoon tea—hamburger and a cup of coffee apiece.

They had nearly four hours to waste and no desire to be seen; they ducked into the largest of the local movie houses,

and watched two Westerns. At eight-thirty they walked stiffly from the theater and down Main Street to a shiny diner, where Kraus stood dinner—two sauced-up barbecue sandwiches, a slice of chocolate cake and a cup of coffee apiece. In a booth by the side window, looking over the near-glamor of Main Street Saturday night, Kraus completed his plans for the evening.

“They get pretty good protection,” he said. “The roadhouse is out on two-forty-two, right on the main road, and that’s clean—no gambling there. But there’s a turnoff, runs off the main road up a little ways into the hills, and there’s only two houses on that turnoff—one of them The Boss’s farm, the other one the big house, with fancy pillars and stuff in front, real old-fashioned style, where they got the gambling rooms. The roadhouse is clean, so the cops sit in a squad car—all night, load of state troopers, supposed to be looking for drunk drivers, right by the turnoff near the roadhouse. So you can’t get up that way and you can’t get out—without the cops knowing about it. And The Boss pays those cops plenty to know just who’s going up that turnoff.

“But there’s another way onto that turnoff—not many people know about it, just The Boss and maybe one or two other guys like me. That’s a kind of tractor road, leads off state three-sixty-one, goes about two miles over the Boss’s farm, then out onto the turnoff between the farmhouse and the money. We gotta drive that two miles without lights, see, so nobody gets wind of us—they won’t mind the noise, cause they can hear cars on two-forty-two all night, they won’t pick us apart from it. Looks like a big moon, but even so we’ll need ten, fifteen minutes for that two miles. Then

we come out on the turnoff and you turn on the lights, see, and we head bold as brass right up to the big house. Got that?"

Mancioni was nearly rigid across the plastic-topped table, hypnotized by the flood of words from his partner and the flashing lights on the street. He noticed that Kraus had stopped talking, and he nodded slowly. "Gee," he said.

"Damn," said Kraus without much emotion, complaining to the world at large; he could do this job with a monkey at the wheel. There was color in his pocked face, and his hands clutched spasmodically at the chrome edges of the table. "You got to listen, Lou," he said. "You're working here, too."

"Sure, Chris," Mancioni said, and leaned forward to get the lights out of his eyes, to concentrate.

"We get up to the big house, but we don't put the car in the lot, we leave it right up by the door—there's cars parked all around the front lawn anyway, see? There's a guy out there, but he don't do nothing so long as we don't put it smack in front of the door so the big shots can't get out. He figures he'll get a couple of bucks when we pull out, and he don't want to make trouble in case it's somebody from The Outfit. I know him. Got that?"

"Sure."

"Okay. You pull a knocker on the door—you do that, got it?—and then you step back a little. That door's gonna be opened by a little fag, in a tux, see, and he's the guy that's trouble. Son of a bitch, he can shoot a man through the balls from half a mile, and you wouldn't know he'd got a gun in his hands until you felt the slug, and then he'd kill you. He don't care about killing, he's killed five guys I know

about, and he likes The Boss. He'll be sort of upset when he sees me, it'll rock him on his heels just a minute, specially cause I'll look at him kind of pleading, like I wanted a job back or something. I'll get my gun on him before he wakes up, and then I'll get him backing up a step or so, and you'll come in. I'm gonna cover him all the way, and you're gonna handle The Boss, because that fag's too much for you. Right?"

"Sure, Chris. You're gonna shoot the fag."

Kraus grinned. "I'd like to shoot the fag," he said, "but that ain't it. When I get the fag backing up, you're gonna close the door and lock it, see? That's easy. Then there's three buttons in the back of that door—one button to call The Boss from the farm, if he's there, and one to call him from the upstairs office, and one to tell the boys around to get out the Thompsons. There's slits in the walls around there, but there ain't none in the entrance hall, so we're safe so long as we're there—and then we're safe when we got The Boss. So you push the middle button—the middle button—the middle button—got it?"

"The middle button."

"And that brings The Boss down from the office—he's there, it's Saturday night. The minute his head shows on the stairs—he walks down—you put your gun on him. He'll come down quiet. He'll be scared, real scared, that son of a bitch'll be real scared. He'll know you're no loser, you don't know what you're doing with that forty-five, and that'll scare him. He'll know it's my gun, with a hair trigger on it, and you're nervous, might shoot any time, might get off a lucky shot. Oh, he'll come easy enough, he will. And then we all go up to the office together, and get him on the

phone to get the boys to lay off—he'll do it, he don't want to get shot, he's got a nice, soft life—and open the safe, and get out forty, fifty, sixty thousand bucks. There'll be guys watching us behind the slits, but they won't move a finger, cause The Boss don't want to get shot.

"We get back downstairs, you still covering The Boss, all the way, me covering the fag, and we get The Boss to tell the boys no fair following till they hear from him, and we take The Boss and the fag in the car, and back down the dirt road, no lights, and out on three-six-one, and when we're maybe ten miles from a town—not much on that road—we clobber The Boss and the fag—no killing, Lou, no killing—and dump them out of the car."

Kraus looked past Mancioni and rubbed his hands. "Then we fool them, see, we drive back here—back here!—and dump this car in an alley. There'll still be people at the show then, and we'll just walk off with a car from the lot, same lot our car's in now, and drive it back up, main roads, we got no worries, back where we came from. That's for you. Me, I'm catching the two o'clock plane out of there, and I'll be in St. Louis by four-thirty, and Houston by eight, and Mexico before you're thinking of lunch." He leaned back in the booth and stretched his long legs and sighed. "I always wanted," he said, "to get a look at that Mexico."

3

Clarence Emerson Ransom, publisher of the morning *Chronicle*, the afternoon *Standard* and the Sunday *Chronicle-Standard*, came from a family that had been rich for as long as it cared to remember. The first money had come

from shipping, out of the Chesapeake Bay; the next from canals; the next from railroads, and then from lumber, and then from copper, and then and now from automobiles and oil. Ransom was not from the richest branch of this green stream—he had richer relatives in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Detroit, Denver and Seattle—but he shared in the pride of its history, and irrigated the fields of publishing with its constant overflow.

Like the Governor, he had been born in this city, and it was his home. He was two years older than Clelland, and had known Billy, and disliked him, nearly all his life. They had grown up on near-by estates in the green hills beyond the college; they had been at Exeter together; they had even written each other once in a while, competitive letters of invitation, when Ransom was at Princeton and the Governor at the State University. Ransom had come home, after a debilitating tour of Europe, the year before Billy left for Oxford; he had bought the *Chronicle* the year Billy returned to teach, and the *Standard* the year Billy became an associate professor. He, too, had tried politics, but he had lost.

When they were home, he and his wife still lived on the rolling farm an hour past the college—but they were rarely home, there was Florida in the winter and Colorado Springs in the summer, and home was hard to live in because their son and daughter were both dead, killed at nineteen and seventeen, in an automobile accident after a country-club dance. Ransom, because of their deaths and because he was not faithful to his wife, maintained in town a four-room penthouse suite atop the five-story steel-and-green-glass building that housed his newspapers. He slept there some-

times, and he ate there often, whenever there was business or entertainment in his careful plans.

He was seated on his long, low couch, reading the proofs of his Sunday editorials, when the elevator opened behind him and the Filipino boy announced Irving Moss.

Ransom marked his initials at the bottom of the editorial. "Sometimes I think you control the clock," he said without turning around. "I've never known you a minute early or a minute late."

"It runs in the family," Moss said. "Comes from opening and closing a department store, looking at all the punch cards from the time clocks." He stood by the elevator, waiting for Ransom to get up and greet him; and when Ransom did, grinning all over his face, Moss was surprised to see a man almost his own height. There is, he thought, a great deal of trickery in four years: in his mind Ransom had shrunk to a wizened little man, when in fact he was five foot eight, not even thin, with a round, wrinkled face and more and darker hair than his age had any reason to expect. Ransom looked well: he had a rich, brown tan, and there were cheerful wrinkles of well-being around his eyes. He still had enough hair to wear it casually, and where his brown scalp showed it was tight and vigorous, not old.

"You've come a long way, Irving, since I last saw you," he said as he gave Moss a strong, bony handshake. "Talent will out."

"Yes."

"Well, what'll you have to drink?"

"Do you have any Pernod?"

"As a matter of fact, I do. I see you've been corrupted."

Moss lifted his right hand, and turned it palm upward. "It's an effeminate habit, but I can risk it."

"Fine." Ransom called to the boys: "Two Pernod." He waved Moss to a high-backed Swedish chair by the door to the terrace, and settled himself back on the couch. "Business first?" he suggested.

"Might be a little less awkward that way," Moss said.

"Yes, of course. Then you can tell me about Europe, and the book I'm sure you're writing. Business. You got my letter, I suppose."

"I did that."

"Well, how would you like to work again for Everybody's Friend?"

Moss grunted with surprise; he had got out of the habit of working for a man who saw around corners. "How much?" he said.

"Two dollah. Take that poor-suffering-prostitute look out of your eyes, Irving. You really don't like Billy any more than I do."

"How much?"

"Two dollars, two dollars every twelve minutes, ten dollars an hour, and you work thirty hours a week, just about. Three hundred a week, Irving, and I don't think you can get more than that, even now."

"How long?"

"Until you put him away."

"Why?"

The boy brought a crystal decanter on a crystal tray, placed it on a marble table in front of the couch, and deftly poured two liqueur glasses until they were all green. He distributed them and left. Ransom sipped, replaced the glass

on the tray, pulled his legs up onto the couch and stretched. "It's more or less a personal matter between Billy and me," he said. "Not that Billy knows about it, he's a little unperceptive. I put up some fight when they nominated him for governor, but not much, since we were both in the same party and I knew he was our best man. We backed him. I'll admit I wasn't too happy when he picked up those majorities, but I could take it, and he hasn't been a bad governor, we might back him again for governor if that was all he wanted. But now they're talking about him for president and—Irving—you know—he might get it. He just might get it."

"I wouldn't be surprised," Moss said, waiting.

"Well, it's a funny thing," Ransom said. "His father owned the bank, and my father owned the biggest deposit in the bank. We grew up down the road from each other, and we had the same advantages. Almost exactly the same, because every time my father did something for me his father had to do it for him, and the other way around. He got a car about five days after I got a car. That sort of thing—stupid, but it happens. I went to Princeton and he went to school here, but the only reason he didn't go to Yale or somewhere is that his father wouldn't trust the runt that far out of his sight, not then. Look. We never liked each other, Billy and I, but there was one day, I don't know exactly when, when I woke up in the morning and decided I hated Billy's guts. That's too strong, but I'll let it stand. And now they tell me Billy's going to be President of the United States, and I'm going to be big pea in my little puddle here—oh, nosirree! Not if I can do anything about it. So I sent you a letter, Irving, and here you are."

"Thanks," Moss said, and meant it. "What makes you think there's anything against him?"

"There's something against everybody," Ransom said. "You know that just about as well as I do. At the very least it's a college friend who turned out a commie. And there's more than that on Billy. He's separated from his wife, nobody knows much about it. How? Why? I know she was a bitch, and just possibly that's all, but again maybe it isn't. Go to New York, butter her up, get her story. If it's any help to you, there was a rumor around that they separated because Billy had a mistress somewhere."

"Uh-huh." Moss looked out the window, where the top of the capitol was floodlit white against the black sky. He considered the proposition, as carefully as he could, thinking of the man who saw around corners. "Do you have any idea who the girl was?"

"That's your job, Irving."

"You want me to find her?"

"I want you to find her."

"What makes you think I'm anxious to boil Billy?"

"That I know. You were working for me that first election day, and you reacted to it. You threw a raging drunk, cursed Billy up and down the press room until you passed out on your face. You picked a fight with your sister Iris, because Frank Reed was Billy's friend. See here. I don't know what you've got against him, and I don't much care. I'm hiring you to do a job."

Moss studied the capitol again, and shook his head slowly. "I don't think I can do it."

Ransom stared for a minute, then snapped his feet off

the couch and onto the rug. "All right," he said. "Let's have dinner."

"No. Wait a minute. What'll you do if I don't take it?"

"I'll get someone else. I'll be sorry to do it. You're the best, Irving, if that's what you're waiting to hear, and you'll enjoy the job. I don't know what's eating on you, and I'll go four hundred if that's it—but you and I won't be friends."

"That's not it." Moss turned back to the window, and after a moment Ransom stood up. Moss put out a flabby but commanding hand. "Slow down," he said. "All right. I've got to take your job, but I'm not the best for it because there's something I won't let you print. I'm going to tell you about it now, so you know it from me, and you know that I'll shoot you through the eyes if you ever print a word of it, if anybody ever prints a word of it. You'd find it out someday, anyway. I know you. And once you can't print that, I guess I am the best for your job. I've got Clelland somewhere on my mind every minute of every day. I guess I'd kill him if the chance ever came up."

"Cut the theatrics," Ransom said irritably. "I don't care about your personal life—unless he's a homosexual, and if he is we can get somebody else for that. I don't believe he is."

"He had a mistress," Moss said slowly, and he realized with some disgust that he was relishing the effect. "My sister Helen was his mistress, and they slipped up somewhere, and she got pregnant, and she's living in Lakeview, about forty miles from here, with his son."

Ransom stopped by the marble table, clenched his brown fists and looked angrily at Moss, who was trembling slightly, his feet scuffing against the carpet. "What do I care about

that?" Ransom said. "Why do I wish to know such a thing? Do you think I would print such a story, ever—about Frank Reed's sister-in-law? Why do I wish to know it? What business is it of mine?"

Moss pulled his muscles tense, and his feet jerked to a stop. "Four hundred dollars?"

"Four hundred dollars," Ransom said.

"Let's eat."

4

First they dulled their appetites with canapés, then they decided to wait until young Billy went to bed, then with great difficulty they got young Billy to bed, and then they stayed in the warm privacy of the apartment for a last drink—the Governor had never liked the idea of the state's chief executive drinking in a roadhouse. It was after eight o'clock when they finally said good night to Manitoba. They rode the self-service elevator down the six flights, stepped through the neon-lit lobby and out into the clear, still October night. The Governor's chauffeur and bodyguard, Sergeant Gordon Smith, a young police-college graduate with close-cut black hair and the build of a bison, stepped forward smartly and saluted.

"Hello, Sergeant," Iris said.

"Hello, Mrs. Reed."

The sergeant held open the door to the big Cadillac limousine, then closed it gently and went around to the driver's seat.

"The One Spot, Gordon," the Governor said.

"Yes, sir." Smith started the motor, then turned around questioningly. "Are you sure you want the official car, sir?"

"Any time you want a night off, Gordon, you can have one. I don't quite see why I need a bodyguard, anyway."

Smith went red about the ears and shook his head. "That's not it, sir. The One Spot—you know, sir—that's a road-house. Are you sure you want the governor's car standing outside?"

"I think it's pretty safe," the Governor said, grinning. "Frank here has some money in the place."

"Oh. I'm sorry, sir. I didn't know that."

"Look here," Reed said, leaning forward. "Is there anything wrong with The One Spot?"

"I don't rightly know, sir."

"Well," the Governor said, "it's Frank's birthday. If he wants to dance with dancing girls, that's his privilege. I'll dance with his wife."

"Yes, sir." The sergeant turned back to his business, the engine hummed lightly, and the heavy limousine rolled off on the road to the University.

"I agree with Gordon's skepticism, Frank," the Governor said as they climbed up the hill past the capitol. "How did Al ever get you to put money in such a risky business?"

"I wouldn't say it was Al's doing," Iris said.

"Not at all," Reed said. "Matter of fact, I nearly had to force him to take it. But I'd eaten at Al's Club almost every day for nine years, all the way through college and the masters and law school, and I never did get poisoned. If he wanted to go out in the big world and make his fortune, why, I thought the least I could do was help him. He said he had enough, but I knew better. I've had too many clients who thought they had enough money to go into the restaurant business."

"How's he been doing?"

"I won't say I've got any dividends yet, but from what I hear he's got himself the smartest place around. I imagine the entertainment's cheap, but I hear the furnishings are stylish and the food's good. A classy roadhouse could make a lot of money around here, especially if it could get the college trade away from the dives."

"It'll be queer to see Al all dressed up in a tux," Iris said.

"You know," the Governor said, "I don't think Al will ever look queer. Any man who runs a college hash house and stays thin—a man like that can call spirits from the vasty deep."

"'Why so can I,' " said Reed, "'or so can any man; but will they come when he does call for them?'"

"What's Hequoth to Hecuba?" said Iris, "Hecuba to Hequoth?"

"Phooey," said the Governor.

"Wrong again," said Iris. "Heathcliff." And the car rolled on.

5

The stolen Pontiac whined slightly as it heaved itself out of the last rut on the rutted road, and Mancioni slammed the wheel around to turn onto the pavement toward the gambling house. Beside him Kraus twitched his head from side to side, ready for an approaching car.

"Turn on your lights, you idiot!"

Mancioni pulled the plunger, and the black tree trunks stood out along the road. There was nobody behind them, nobody before them.

"We're home free!" Kraus said. "Lou! We're home free!"

Mancioni pressed down on the accelerator, and the car sped up the hill.

"Just up a ways, just a little ways, then you'll see the lights, and the big house, and all the cars. They ain't got much protection up there—they count on the cops at the road. We're home free!"

The car zipped over the rise; and ahead, to both sides, the night was black. "Oh, Mother Jesus!"

"What's wrong, Chris?"

"Oh, that bastard, that mawfa son of a bitch, that—"

"What is it, Chris?"

"He's closed, for Christ's sake, he's closed, the joint ain't working!"

"Where do I turn, Chris?"

"You don't turn, you friggin moron, stop the friggin car!"

"You mean there's no money, Chris?"

"Stop the car, you jackass! Stop the car!"

Mancioni obediently braked the car, turned it onto the shoulder of the road, and waited.

"Turn off the lights!"

Mancioni pushed the button, and they were sitting in darkness. Suddenly Kraus slapped the palms of his hands against the windshield. "Oh, that lucky bastard!" he shouted, yelping like a dog, "nothing happens wrong to him! So the cops closed him down—tonight, just tonight. He thinks he's losing money, he'll have to buy a new police captain, he don't know, that lucky bastard, he don't know!" The yelp went out of his voice, and he leaned back against

the cushions. "There goes that trip to Mexico," he said with conscious philosophy.

"What about me, Chris?" Mancioni said. "I gotta have the money."

"Aah, there's no money tonight," Kraus said. "Forget I ever mentioned it."

"But there's the kid, the kid's coming, and I promised Mary there'd be money, Mary thinks I'm coming back with some money, I told her I was trucking——"

"I told you there's no money. Forget it."

"Maybe there's somebody up at the house anyway, maybe they just turned out the lights, the boss could be there, couldn't he, with money in the house, we——"

"Get ourselves shot up for a couple of hundred lousy bills? Swing the car around. We better get out."

"But, Chris—the money——"

"I told you, forget it. *Forget it!*"

"Yeh, Chris, sure." He turned on the lights and swung around on the wheel. The car rolled across the narrow road into a ghostly gray bush, and he backed away, frowning. "But maybe somewheres else, Chris? You know where, you been around. I gotta get the money, Chris."

"You can go right down to two-forty-two, we won't need that friggin dirt road. Get out of here!"

"Some other place?" Mancioni whined, swinging the car straight toward the dimly lit roadhouse at the bottom of the hill. "Some other place, Chris? I heard, somebody told me, there's a new place up the road, The One Spot, he called it, he said——"

"Can it. You couldn't get near that place with a regiment of marines." Kraus looked gloomily down the road toward

the approaching restaurant, and the full weight of depression fell on his spirit. "There's nothing doing tonight."

"But," Mancioni said with unconscious shrewdness, "Chris, you want to go to Mexico, you want to get out, you got the ticket, you need some money, too."

Kraus kicked Mancioni's foot off the accelerator, reached across his body and pulled the emergency. The car jolted to a stop and Mancioni hit the steering wheel. He lay over it a moment, and Kraus slapped him across the face, first with the right hand, then with the left. "You pimply bastard," he said. "You want to get me mad?"

6

Al, thin and handsome, with long black hair brushed tightly back, heard immediately that the Governor's car was coming up the driveway, and gave immediate orders. He was standing at the door when the car stopped and the doorman helped the official party onto the concrete apron; he did not look queer, he looked merely Italian—and nervous.

"Governor! You do my place an honor."

"That's all right, Al. I'm just trying to help Frank get back his investment."

Al and the Governor shook hands, then Al and Iris shook hands, then Al and Frank shook hands, and they all stretched themselves in the brilliant night. Inside, a seven-piece dance band rattled its saxophones.

"If you would go into the bar, please," Al began, "for a minute only, I will have a ringside table set up for you. If you had called it would be ready, but I did not know——"

"It's our fault for not calling," the Governor said. "But I'd rather not lounge around the bar. Is it a good bar?"

"The best."

"Fine." He turned to Sergeant Smith, who was standing at attention by the car, frowning. "Get yourself a drink, Gordon, and—have you had dinner yet?"

"No, sir."

"Well, get yourself a good steak." Back to Al: "Put it on our bill. Do you think that table's ready now?"

"Not quite, Governor. Of course—" and now came the necessary gamble; the muscles tightened under the tuxedo—"if you wish, you may wait in the main dining room, but I do not think—"

"No, there's no need to be ogled," the Governor said. "We'll wait out here. It's a fine night."

The lights went off in the long room that capped a T on the roadhouse; softly, the shutters clicked closed. The few players—there were only a dozen of them at that hour—were shepherded into the main dining room and seated toward the rear, and invited to order on the house their heart's desire.

"How's business been, Al?" Reed said, putting his arm around his wife's waist; and Al smiled at them with genuine affection. He had served them at his counter when they were scarcely sweethearts, he thought; they meant him no harm.

"I think," he said, "I think you will have your money back in a year, maybe two years. It has been that good."

"It couldn't happen to a better cook," said Iris, leaning back against Reed's arm, breathing happily the smell of fir trees on the wind. "Happy birthday, honey."

A waiter came briskly to Al, and he brightened almost to cheerfulness. "We are all ready now," he said. "Will you step this way, please, Governor?"

The Governor stood aside and refused to move until Reed and Iris, arm in arm, stepped in. Then he followed, smiling at their pleasure, a little touchy in his step, for all the voters gathered in the restaurant.

Chapter Three

IRVING MOSS got out of the taxi on the corner, and walked slowly down the row of thirty-thousand-dollar houses, where the picture windows faced away from the road. The numbers were not easy to find, but O'Connor's house, the fifth in the row, was unmistakable, lit like a billboard and bulging with people. Moss approached it reluctantly.

The clear taste of the night was in his mouth, and he tried to relish it. He had been born to be happy; he was susceptible to a million small, natural pleasures; his heart leaped at the sound of a distant night voice; his skin thrilled to a spring breeze; his eye watered with honest sentiment to a squirrel in the park. Sitting alone in a crowd, enjoying the moment of existence with a dozen instincts lost to ordinary men, he felt himself blessed. He had sense, too; when the voice inside, at these moments, said softly, "You are Prometheus," his reason without hesitation said, "Nonsense; you are Irving Moss."

But somehow there was more to it than that; he had the

artist's sense of mortality, the feeling that there was work to be done and he would never live to do it. He lay awake for hours on countless nights, his hand to his temple, counting the beats of his perfectly healthy heart, feeling the pains in his shoulder, his ankle, his chest. He knew that his foot was going to sleep, that his circulation was failing; his heart skipped a beat, or beat too heavily—hypertension—or suddenly the beat vanished altogether, as he neared sleep and his hand moved unconsciously from the pulse. The next day he would be dead—and who would remember?

Those were the days he worried about his health; on other days he worried about being a Jew. As a child, as an adolescent, he had almost never been a Jew; he came from an irreligious home, he went to a progressive school, he moved freely at high school and college in societies wholly scrambled of religions and races. Hitler and America First, which had made such devastation in the self-satisfaction of the Eastern Jew, had been matters of fact rather than feeling in the German farmlands of the Midwest, where they had their strength. And he had come upon the possibilities of persecution only when he was thirty; when a man he had foolishly respected had seduced his sister, got her pregnant, and abandoned her to humiliation.

So now he was losing, at a later age than most but as surely as any, that sense of well-being which is the essence of happiness. The two great disintegrators—the longing for revenge and the hope for immortality—were at work in his mind, and he could feel them at work. In Europe, with the excitement of foreign sights and sounds and bits of knowledge, he had scarcely noticed the ebbing away of spontaneous pleasures; but here, home again, in the brittle

bitter memories of the recent past, he was like the arthritic deprived of his dangerous but necessary drug. The pains that had driven him abroad now returned with edges sharpened by years of suppression. And added to them was this new sense of impermanence, of opportunity abandoned, of paradise lost.

He came from a family that set a high value on immortality. In his trunk, still in New York, was the family Torah, the Book of Laws, passed on by his grandfather, the last of the family rabbis, to his skeptical father, to him. It was an old book, nearly four hundred years old, and in the book were written all the marriages and all the eldest sons—ten rabbis, in Poland, then Germany, then Savannah, Georgia; a successful retailer, and Irving Moss. It was like a great stud book kept by some great breeder: the family numbers of the females, the stallions traced in tail-male descent, the sons' successes inscribed, stakes and handicaps, down to Irving, who was a claimer and had been claimed. He had no religion, no sense of calling, no assurance of worth; he was without the Law. Even the permanence of descendants was missing; he could not marry—it was beyond argument, it was a fact—until something had been done for Helen.

So he stood outside the two-level, narrow, brick-and-glass house at Forty-Seven Pine Road, wondering what it would profit him to enter, now that he had lost his soul. The voice said, "Nonsense; you're Irving Moss," but that magic honesty was losing its power; he was beginning to need some greater assurance. He hated parties, worst of all he hated O'Connor's parties, with their second-rate college intellectuals, their frustrated regional writers, their local

politicos, their dramatic students, their giggling professors—and O'Connor on the sidelines, the one genuine talent in the crew of loudmouthed failures, finding a nasty pleasure. Then a wave of laughter billowed out the door, and caught him, and told him that he was missing something, that something permanent was drifting a few steps ahead in the overlit house, that somewhere in this drunken party was the restoration of well-being, the recovery of youth—

2

Mancioni made a pest of himself all the way from the turnoff into Vicksville, forty-three miles at forty miles an hour, nagging all the way. Kraus heard him out without any further display of anger: if you teamed up with an idiot you took what you got, and besides the kid had his rights to complain, he needed the dough, though he'd be better off without that wife of his, that slut, and if some truck ran over his kids. He tuned his ears to the pleasant hum of the stolen motor and shut out the whine beside him, and the dark countryside rolled rapidly by. There was always another stickup; Mexico could wait. He lit his first cigarette of the day—he was a Puritan about crime, he didn't smoke and he didn't drink the day of a job.

The town square of Vicksville was a Civil War bandstand, and Mancioni slowed as he neared it, stopped at the corner, and turned, droning on the while. "They say it's real swank, The One Spot, real money, they bet a hundred bucks on a card and they're sports, they pay six to one for three sevens, the poolroom games don't give you nothing for three sevens, don't even give you four-to-one for six

card under, don't give you nothing. Place like that, it don't expect to be robbed, Chris, guy like you could stick it up, Chris, easy as pie, it don't think nothing's coming, and you could get out to Mexico, and me, I'd have money for Mary, and the kid—"

"Run all around the square and pull up to that side road by the movie house," Kraus said.

"What, Chris? You see a place?"

"No, stupid, I don't see no goddam place. There's a car back there in the shadows."

"Another car, Chris? I don't wanna steal another car, Chris."

"You're not going to steal any cars," Kraus said wearily. "Just pull up."

"I can't get any money out of a car, Chris."

"Do as you're told," Kraus said, "and shut up." The car circled the square, headed down the dark side of the theater, and pulled up in the shadows. "You just sit," Kraus said. He opened the door, stretched his legs over the running board, and hopped out onto the road. He went around to the front of the Pontiac and bent down; then he walked past Mancioni's window, whistling, and went to the back and bent down again. Less than a minute after he had opened his door he was at the car behind them, exchanging license plates; and in less than five minutes he had finished the trade and was back in his seat. "Little exercise," he said.

"Why'd you do that, Chris?"

"You figure it out," Kraus said. "I give you a hint—that guy won't know his plates are different for about eight days. Now you just drive us nice and safe back home."

"Up to The One Spot, maybe, Chris?"

"You let me off at the room, and gimme back the gun, Lou, old boy, and you can go to The One Spot all by yourself. I hope you make a million."

"Aw, Chris. I dunno, I dunno how to do it. You know that. I ain't never done it before, and I just dunno. Maybe if we can't make The One Spot, maybe there's some other place. Some all-night drugstore, or something, Jesus—that ought to be easy, Chris, for a guy like you. I don't need much, Chris, a hundred bucks, a hundred fifty, that'll do for me and Mary. Maybe a cigar store, Chris, maybe—"

"Wait a minute, stupid. Wait a minute. I just got the big one, the big idea. Maybe we can make a mark tonight."

"The One Spot, Chris?"

"You just drive the car," Kraus said, and thought with a moment's fear of the cigarette he had smoked so carelessly—and then forgot it, deliberately, because he still had the reservation for Mexico and he had always wanted to see Mexico. "Not The One Spot," he said. "I know another place."

3

"It's all in the anus," said a loud, bright, rather nasal voice as Moss stepped into the hallway. The voice belonged to a large, rotund young man with a beefy red face (four drinks) and mouse-colored hair. It was the center of the wave of laughter that had drawn Moss into the party; now that he was near the source he could see that the laughter was nervous and the waves artificial. Distance, he thought, and enchantment.

"It's all in the anus," the voice said again, insistently. "Any man who doesn't regard his anus is a fool. *There's*

the root of the diseases that hit intelligent people. I've been in practice three years now, and I can tell just by looking at a man whether he's a constipated type or a diarrheic type—and why. Sometimes," he added dreamily, "I get a genuine anal-erotic, and then—"

Gloria O'Connor came toward Moss, listing first to one side, then to the other, in a style that she believed to be sexy, that was, oddly enough, sexy on her. Looking at her, Moss admired O'Connor's good luck: he had married a coarse beauty, and she had filled out for him until now, in her early thirties, she was a possession greatly to be envied. Moss looked, and somewhere inside him a chop was licked.

"Irving!" she said. "I haven't seen you in *years!*"

"What's more important," he said with a sudden show of bravery, "I haven't seen you. I'd almost forgot what I was missing."

"Ooh, you dirty flatterer," she said, loving it, "you almost make me forget I'm an old married woman, a hag practically."

"Harry," Moss said pontifically, "is unworthy of you. Come, leave this modern hovel and run away with me." He had never been much good at this game, he thought, but he played it.

"I know he's unworthy," she said, "but what can I do? Drop your coat in the bedroom—over there—and join the fun. Doctor Arkel, the psychiatrist, is telling us all his theories."

"For free?"

"Well," she said thoughtlessly, "he's a little drunk."

Arkel's voice followed Moss into the bedroom. He threw his coat on the pile, and noticed that even under the mass

of worsteds and furs and camel's-hairs the double bed was aggressively utilitarian. The other chop was licked, with a sigh; then he stiffened his shoulders and went out into the crowd. He stood alone near the center of the room—generations changed fast in a college town, almost as fast in a state capital; at first glance he saw nobody he knew. Then, in a corner of the room, he spotted Ira Field, swapping stories—doubtless dirty stories—with the two top officers of the opposite political club. Field was mayor of the city, but to Moss something more: a childhood friend, his father's lawyer, an odd, stout, little pyramid of a man, with frizzled sandy hair once on a low forehead, now fringing the top of his skull. Moss took a tentative step toward the corner, then stopped: Ira was a backslapper, and Moss had no particular desire, not right now, to have his back politically slapped. Instead, he wandered about the party, keeping to himself, and he was happy: he fancied the role of observer. He heard the locals, whose team had lost a ball game, trying to bait the Virginians—so obviously that the Virginians successfully, off-handedly, baited them. The Midwest and Southern accents grew thicker as the contests proceeded, and Moss stood at the edges of the groups, listening: listening was worth doing. Then his back was slapped, after all.

"Here he is, Mimi, the guest of honor!" O'Connor said. "A serious man, a correspondent, a *foreign* correspondent, who will tell you everything your great big heart must know. What are the World Federalists doing? Ask Moss. Is it true that Prokofiev put a louse in Stalin's mustache, and that's why he was a formalist? Ask Moss. Was that horse doped in the fifth race at the Detroit Fair Grounds—or was

a Republican inspector trying to make trouble for the state administration? Ask Moss. He may not know the answer, but he'll tell you, tell you in such an authoritative voice that you'll never doubt him for a minute—and that'll set your mind at peace, which is every right-thinking person's great goal, and also a lot more than that ass Arkel can ever do for anybody. Ass Arkel. That's pretty good."

Mimi was a lovely, soft, blonde girl, college girl by the look of her, dressed to the nines and only a small distance beyond. She stared at Moss, amazed.

"Very good indeed, Harry," said Moss. "But no more than I'd expect."

4

The One Spot had been designed by a third-year student of the University's School of Architecture—"a young man who," Al said to anybody who asked, "will go far." Al had always kept on good terms with the University, and the idea for a competition in restaurant design had come to him from the chairman of the Architecture Department. At first Hofmann had worried—was a roadhouse a proper subject for academic inquiry?—but even while he was debating, Al put up two thousand dollars in prizes, and *Architectural Forum* expressed an interest in the competition, and the architecture boys began building scale models, until the University had no choice. Al, the builder and the chairman of the architecture faculty sat as judges and picked a design. The builder altered the proportions a little to provide a second room "available for private parties," and large enough to hold two tables of roulette, four tables of Black-

jack and three tables of dice. Every effort was made to keep it in the same precocious style.

The customer entered The One Spot through a short hall (to his left the hat-check booth and a long bar, to his right, on the other side of a concrete wall, the kitchen) into a large square room with a bandstand at the center and a dance floor all around the bandstand, and five tiers, each two tables wide, each two feet higher than the one before, rising in squares back to the wall. The wall itself was finished in alternating panels of mirror and black cloth. The ceiling was twenty-two feet above the dance floor, and a free-form wood sounding board, painted red, hung on steel cables halfway down to the bandstand. The room was lit by eight spots concealed on the top of the sounding board and aimed at the white stucco ceiling. *Architectural Forum* had been impressed with it all, as student work, and would have run the story except that O'Connor, asked to take the pictures, had warned them about the gambling. The Architecture Department, which did not know about the gambling, took its own pictures and, with a sneer at *Architectural Forum*, got them published in the Italian magazine *Spazio*.

The floor show was scheduled for nine-thirty, but it was not a floor show to improve the appetite; so Al, who was certainly intelligent enough to know about his own floor show, put it off until the Governor's party had finished its Baked Alaska (blazing, for this one serving, with Fine Champagne Cognac X. S.). He explained to a few regular patrons the reason for the delay, and in the process considered the show more deeply. When the coffee was served—an individual glass bottle, two cups to each diner, in

what was considered the New York manner—he went over to the Governor's table.

"Is everything satisfactory, Mr. Governor, Mr. Reed?"

"Just fine, Al," the Governor said. "I wish my kitchen staff could buy such steaks."

"Any time you wish, Governor . . ."

"Forget it, Al."

"And I think I would like to apologize to you a little for my floor show," Al said pudgily. "It is not, I am afraid, up to the very highest taste. But, you know, I must cater to the college boys."

"Do we have to have the floor show right now?" Iris said. "I'd like to get a dance in first."

"Of course! Of course! I am sorry I have been stupid."

"Buck up, Al," said the Governor.

"Okay, birthday boy," said Iris.

"We've got a guest," Reed said, frowning lightly.

"That's all right. You can dance with your wife—even if she has to ask you."

Iris stood up, bowed to the Governor, bowed to Al, and led her husband onto the dance floor. Al was disposed to leave, but the Governor began talking.

"I hope you're making some money for them, Al," he said. "There's the nicest couple you could ever hope to meet." He watched them whirl, rather successfully, around the floor. "Nice, sober, restrained, intelligent, enjoyable people. Happy, too."

Al was seriously embarrassed; it did not occur to him that no answer was expected. He coughed and said, "They are wonderful, uh, people. Why," he said with a burst of inspiration, "I am proud they have money in my place!"

Most of these roadhouses, you know, the money in them—you would not wish to know where it comes from.”

The Governor was still in the slightly roseate world of his affection; Al's words reached him slowly and pinkly. When he understood them he turned away from the dance floor, reluctantly and irritably. “You'd be surprised,” he said, “what I might wish to know.”

“Oh. I mean, Governor, you would not wish me to, well, you wouldn't.”

“No, I guess you're right. Tonight's a party.”

Iris and Reed came arm in arm to the table, and Iris gave Al a flamenco gesture. “On with the floor show!”

“Yes, Madame,” said Al, bowing, and strode off breathing heavily.

The One Spot's floor show began with a male vocal trio, local talent in their first decent job, singing two popular hits and a dirty college song. They were followed by a pair of acrobats, somewhat older, with dyed hair, a routine juggling interlude, and a repulsive line of blue, slightly homosexual patter. Then there was the featured act—TIGER-LILY, DIRECT FROM FOUR MONTHS IN AN EXCLUSIVE BROADWAY NITE-CLUB.

This act was a little less elevating than the first two. It had three elements—a dance by Lily, in watery blue leotard with transparent, green-gauze water lilies, a chase around the floor by fully costumed Tiger, who paused to sniff at the girls seated at the ringside tables, and finally (Al catered to the college crowd) a ripping off of the leotard and nude exit. On this night, to save the Governor's susceptibilities and obey state laws, the grand finale was omitted. Even so, it was a peculiarly repulsive enter-

tainment, and after the first moment the Governor took some pains to avoid looking at it. He happened to have his eyes on the doorway when Gus Forester came in with three of the Phi Gamma Gamma boys.

They had seen the show before, and their minds were on more manly matters; they did not wait for the end of the act, but headed around on the highest level to a door in the rear of the room: a black door with a large, white spot on it. As they neared it Al scowled up from near the Governor's table and a waiter waved them away. Forester held his ground; the Governor saw the leathery lips move in the wizened face, and what he saw he read.

"What in hell's wrong now?"

There was an answer from Al, and Forester turned and looked at the Governor's table and pretended to spit. "That son of a bitch," he said.

Al moved his arms, and smiled, and nodded. Forester started down the steps to the dance floor, still talking, his admiring college boys around him. The Governor caught most of it:

"That's what you always get in these tony joints: if the wheel ain't crooked there's no game at all. Get out of this hole. I know another place. . . ."

5

It was only four days since Mimi Delanno's coronation as Campus Queen, and Moss was much impressed with her. She was, in fact, a beauty, a North-Italian blonde with small, regular features and a small, perfectly molded body. She had won her title honestly enough, without going to bed with a single photographer—but that was only because

nobody had asked her, and at the college, where a number of people had asked and received, she was believed guilty of bribery. The rumors did not bother her, because she knew nothing about them; she was one of those rare, beautiful, even-tempered innocents who never learn that out of any fifty conquerors thirty will talk and ten will boast. With Moss there was no need to worry, anyway; he had heard none of the rumors. As a matter of fact, she awed him.

Luckily, she was a journalism student, she had heard her friends and teachers talk about Irving Moss, and she was as awed as he. On both sides it was awe at first sight; the two of them stood on an island in the middle of the room, people and conversation flowing around them:

“... scored that touchdown, wasn't a safety in the nation could've put a finger on him, he was that fast—”

“Look, Ira, there's this boy in the fourth ward, he's going into the insurance business, name of Rhodes, and I promised his father I'd have a talk with you about a new kind of vandalism policy the boy wants to sell, and—”

“—and the little bastard is sitting there at the big white desk, making out the spring term assignments. He says to me, ‘Stanley, I'm afraid some of the interest has gone out of Latin American economics, and we're going to have to cut you down to one undergraduate course next year. That means,’ he says, ‘let me see,’ he says, ‘you'll take a section of Ek One, and, since you've worked so hard on the mathematical theory, perhaps I'll lend you to statistics for a course.’ He just sat there, you know him, and said, ‘All you young men, with Latin America and statistics, and really very little knowledge of money and banking—the

roots of our economy, Stanley! the very roots!' Next time he has a book published I'm going to—"

"It isn't just a matter of digestion or indigestion, or anal-eroticism—it's the relation of the entire nervous system to the colon and the anal canal. What happens in the anus when you get drunk? I'll tell you—"

They stood alone, wrapped in their little predatory romance, very pleased with themselves and very disgusted with the party. "You make me feel like an old man," Moss said. "Some of your teachers are boys I taught when I was sort of a visiting lecturer at the journalism school. It doesn't seem that long ago."

"Who do you mean?" she said.

"Oh, Hargrave and Adams, and Wairton—is Wairton still there?"

"Gee, I don't even know him."

"I guess he went to Columbia, Pulitzer money. When I was a kid I wanted more than anything to work on the *World*. I guess you never even heard of the *World*."

"Oh, yes. Professor Tolman's always talking about the *World*. I guess it was *The New Yorker* of those days, sort of."

"I don't think so. Hell, I don't know—I'm not that old. I never saw more than ten or twenty copies of the *World*. That was a New York paper, and I was born out here, lived here all the way up to the time I got sent to Washington."

"I didn't know that, Irving." She said the name a little tentatively, with a liquid warmth that turned his soul to pudding. "Where did you live?"

"Up on the hill, up on West Street. Before they put all the fraternity houses there."

"Was your father connected with the University?"

Moss grinned. "In a way."

O'Connor was beside them now, a tidal wave breaking over the island. "Old man Moss was almost an official—an official University supplier," O'Connor said. "He had the best cut-rate department store in the Midwest, bar none. Real cheap—I used to think he was peddling stolen goods, before I met Irving here——"

6

"Here," said Kraus. "Pull her up."

Mancioni parked the car behind a half-ton truck in front of a lumber yard; Kraus got out, and around, and into the back seat behind the driver. "Turn off the lights," he said.

Kraus peered at the neighborhood. There were a few lights on in the apartments over the rows of small stores; a short way up the hill a streetcar flashed blue sparks. A block behind them were the lights of a diner; a block ahead a light behind a plate-glass window: GOOD OLD DAYS CIGAR STORE.

"Whaddaya want, Chris?"

"You stay here. I'll go see how the game looks."

Kraus stepped out, straightened his coat and his shoulders, and walked down the street toward the cigar store. He walked out near the curb, and when he was fifteen feet from the store he stopped: entrance at the right, counter at the left, back door behind the counter alley, watch out for the glass, dangerous. He shook his head, then stuck his hands in his pockets and sauntered jauntily in.

Behind the grimy glass counter was a tall, pudgy young man with a wispy brown mustache and bad skin and unsteady brown eyes. He watched Kraus open the door: punk; pretty well dressed; looking to make money off somebody else; probably finding a game for some football tourist, and the tourist cuts him in; may be money there.

Kraus looked contemptuously at the clerk and ran a disgusted eye over the store's filthy fixtures. "Where's the game?" he said.

"Whadda you wanna know?"

"I got money. Some of it's mine. Some of it ain't. But it's real money." Kraus looked significantly at the fat face. "Dice money."

"Bring him around. We gotta game."

"I want to see the layout," Kraus said.

"You got your nerve."

"Sure. This is my sucker, bobo, not yours. If I don't like the layout, I take him somewheres else. Lemme see the game."

The clerk grinned and showed a mouthful of brown teeth. "Okay," he said. He flipped a switch under the counter. "Coming in," he said. He walked over to the back door and opened it. "See for yourself."

The back room was long and narrow, with four green tables, two poker, two dice, set in a line. There were about twenty men in the room, half a dozen lounging around chairs against the walls, reading girlie magazines or smoking or watching, the rest around the two poker tables and one of the dice tables. The walls were a blotchy gray, with the plaster peeling at the corners; the floor was filthy and littered with newspaper; the chairs were bare brown wood.

But the customers wore good shirts, and the coats on the coatrack were good coats, and the chips were nicely stacked.

"How much buys in?" Kraus said.

"For you, a hundred. For your friend, a thousand."

"I get a hundred, fifty for it," Kraus said flatly.

"You get in the thousand, I'll give you a fifty chip."

"Okay, sonny," Kraus said. "You'll see me in about an hour."

"You wanted for anything?" the clerk said.

"None of your business."

"Just doing you a turn, punk. Cop comes around in an hour or so. Maybe you better make it ninety minutes."

"Square enough," Kraus said. "Thanks."

The clerk closed the door and Kraus sauntered off to the car. He pushed Mancioni out of the driver's seat and drove off, half a mile north, half a mile east, half a mile south, half a mile west, around the corner and back to his starting point. He turned off the lights and sat back. "A setup," he said. "We get there, all you got to do is kick open a door and hold a gun on the back room. I'll get the money."

"What's it look like, Chris? Do they have a lot of money? Is it a real good place?"

"Don't ask questions, so you don't think about it. All you got to do is hold a gun on the back room—and don't shoot. It's easier than women, nothing to worry about, not for a minute. Just so long as you don't shoot."

"Will there be money, Chris, enough money, real money, I can take Mary and the kid?"

"Sure, Lou. Sure. You just go to sleep now, relax. I want to watch what goes in there and what comes out. You sleep."

They sat for an hour and fifteen minutes. Seven people left and twelve arrived—five in private cars, three on foot, and four—Gus Forester and the Phi Gamma Gamma boys—by cab.

7

The Governor found Sergeant Smith leaning his chair against the wall at a table near the bar, smoking his Oom Paul and sizing up the patrons—he was a dedicated policeman. He was facing away from the entrance, and he did not see the Governor until it was too late for concealment. He slammed his chair down onto the carpet, dropped his pipe into the chair, jumped to attention and saluted.

The Governor grinned, quite briefly. "Sit down, Gordon," he said. He took the other chair at the table and rested his elbows on its arm. "I want you to help me with something," he said.

"What can I do, sir?"

"What's wrong with this place, Gordon?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"None of that, Gordon. You know what I mean."

Sergeant Smith shifted uncomfortably and looked into the bowl of his pipe. "Maybe I do, sir," he said finally. "I didn't know you would want to know. What I mean is, sir, I thought—well—I thought you knew."

The Governor felt a moment's wild rage; he grasped the edge of the table with both hands and started to his feet, and his face colored and the veins stood out in his forehead—and then his intelligence intervened, and he felt a sense of despair, and he fell back into his chair. And all this time, through the anger and despair, some part of his

mind was working logically, planning, seeking the honorable, the undamaging, the politically wise way out. Sergeant Smith was on his feet, his right hand forward in a pleading gesture. "I'm sorry, sir, my God, I'm sorry—" but the Governor cut him off. "That's all right, Gordon," the Governor said, and he waited for his plan to cool. "Why did you think I knew?"

"I thought everybody knew, sir, there's been gambling here three months, ever since the place opened. And I heard you saying Mr. Reed had money in it—"

"Frank doesn't know either," the Governor said. "You mustn't assume, in the future, that Mr. Reed and I know what everybody knows. We must know so many things that nobody knows, we don't have time, Gordon. And if you're to remain as my guard, and my friend, you must never again assume that the governor of this state connives at violation of the law. I've never for a moment doubted your honesty, Gordon. In all loyalty you mustn't doubt mine."

"I *am* sorry, sir. I really am. But—"

"No buts, Gordon. Your loyalty goes to one man, to me. If you don't trust me, you must apply for reassignment. And your job is to guard me, not merely from assassins, whatever that is, but from trouble in general. You owed me the duty of warning me that I was ordering you to a gambling house. You were derelict in that duty. That's your reprimand, and there'll be no more. Now, sit down, boy, sit down."

Sergeant Smith sat down, his young, freckled face red with personal discomfort, his fists clenched at his side. The Governor slumped wearily and said, "Now, do the state police know about this place?"

"I don't see how they could help it, sir."

"It would mean, specifically, that the captain at the nearest barracks has been bribed."

"I should think so, sir."

"And the lieutenants under him have got a share of it."

"Yes, sir."

"And several of the officers and patrolmen on this stretch of the highway have got theirs."

"Yes, sir."

"And just possibly Major Gilligan and Colonel Nickerson have decided not to interfere."

"I don't know about that, sir."

"Well, you wouldn't. Look. You were graduated from police academy two years ago, correct?"

"Yes, sir."

"There was a class of maybe thirty of you, and almost all of you went right into our force."

"Yes, sir."

"You can't be bribed—that's my loyalty to you, Gordon, I don't want any answer or thanks—and there must be at least another dozen or so of your friends that can't be bribed."

"Of our whole class, sir, I can't think of more than one or two who'd take a bribe."

"Let's hope that's true. Let's see. The nearest barracks to here is Nortonsville. That's out—I don't want anybody there to know about this raid until it's done. The one beyond that is Heath—that's an hour's drive from here, right, Gordon?"

"Yes, sir. Maybe a little more."

"Do you know anybody at that station?"

"A few men, sir."

"Four?"

"Yes, sir."

"Four you can trust absolutely—as I trust you?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. In about ten minutes you're going to drive me and Frank and Iris back to the capital. Then you're going to take the official car up to Heath and round up your four friends—on duty or off duty. Here, I'll give you a letter." The Governor pulled out his billfold and ripped a sheet from a memo pad stamped with the state seal. He wrote in his clear, round handwriting:

Sergeant Gordon Smith, the bearer of this memorandum, is acting under my orders. Please give him all co-operation. Any overtime work required will be paid for at the usual rates. WILLIAM CLELLAND, GOVERNOR.

"That'll do it, I think, Gordon. When you get your men, bring them back here. It ought to be one-fifteen or so—don't make it much earlier. This place will be empty when you arrive—closed. If it isn't—and I suppose there's a bare chance that it won't be—you close it. Then I want you to go into that back room, or wherever the gambling is, and rip the place apart. Make it rubble, Gordon, rubble. And then go away quietly. We're not going to make any big noise about this—no stories in the papers, nobody arrested, no doors padlocked. Not now, anyway. But there'll be some troopers, and some officers, quietly resigning from the force, and some crooks leaving the state. So make sure they're men you can trust, Gordon, as I trust you. As you trust me."

The Governor took the memo and folded it and handed it to Sergeant Smith, who put it in his gun belt and looked across the table with his most earnest, his youngest expression. "Yes, sir. I'll see to it that nothing goes wrong, sir. And I hope you'll accept my apologies."

The Governor stood up, rested his hands on the table and leaned forward. "If you were somebody who didn't know me," he said, "who'd never watched me work, then I'd say that there was no reason for you to apologize. As it is, I think I need your apologies, and all I can do is hope that the voters of this state know better than you do—well, skip it, Gordon." The Governor straightened and held out his hand, and Sergeant Smith suddenly realized he was seated, and jumped to attention, and shook the Governor's hand, and saluted. "I'm going to forget about it, Gordon, and you do the same. Your apologies are accepted, and I'll sleep soundly tonight without worrying about your mission. I'll be calling you in about five minutes."

"Thank you, sir."

The Governor went back to his table; Reed and Iris were dancing. He called the waiter, and asked for Al; and within thirty seconds Al was at his side. "Bad news for you, Al," the Governor said, examining a corner of the tablecloth.

"Something is wrong? What can I do?"

"Worse news than that. You're going to close this place down tonight at one—I don't care what time you usually close, I want everybody out of here at one. About one-fifteen a crew of state troopers is coming here, and they're going to wreck your gambling setup. Meanwhile—don't interrupt me, Al—you're going into your office and make up

two lists, one of the cops you've bribed, another of the crooks who put up the money for this place. Get those lists to my office by tomorrow at noon, and make them complete—because if I ever find that they aren't complete you're going to jail. Is that understood, Al?"

"What are you doing to me, Governor?"

"Keeping you out of jail, Al, and maybe saving your restaurant here. It's a nice place. If you can keep it going without gambling, all the luck in the world to you. I'm not going to padlock it, I'm not going to publicize the raid, I'm not going to make any trouble for you, Al. But I am going to enforce the laws, and they say no gambling."

"They will kill me, Governor. They will kill me dead."

"I hope not. You made a decent living out of that lunch-room by the college, you can go back to it. Right now, and until you give me those lists, you're in more danger from me than from any gang of crooks in the world. Remember that, Al."

"Billy, I can't——"

"Yes, you can. That's all. I'm not talking any more about this business, I don't want to soil my hands in it."

"What if I put Frank Reed on the list of crooks who gave me money?"

The Governor looked at Al for the first time, and laughed. "By all means, Al. And if you want to give the papers the story of the raid, that's fine, too. You can't hurt Frank, and you can't hurt me—not because we're honest men, though that helps, but because we're fifty points smarter than you are, and always will be." The Governor took out his wallet and put three twenties on the table. "That covers our bill,

our tip, and maybe a new chance for you," he said. "Now get to hell out of my sight and stay out."

Al's hand came down and took the three bills, and disappeared, and the Governor looked out across the table to Frank and Iris Reed, dancing now privately in a corner of the floor. They were still, he thought, the most decent, the most pleasant people in the world; he was utterly dependent on their friendship, their reciprocal affection; but maybe they were a little too trusting. Well, he thought bitterly, it cuts both ways; even after Helen, they still trust me.

"Where have you been?" said Iris.

"Talking to Gordon Smith."

Reed stopped smiling. "What's wrong, Billy?"

"You've got your money in a bad place, Frank, and I don't think it's ever coming out. You didn't put in so much that you can't afford to lose it, did you?"

"In the first place," Reed said, looking at him queerly, "I didn't. In the second place, that's irrelevant to whatever you're talking about. What's the matter? What's been going on here?"

"Gambling, Frank, and great quantities of it, I would say. According to Gordon, everybody in the state but you and me has known about it, and for some time, too. So Gordon is going to drive us home, and then gather up a gang of troopers and take the gambling rooms apart. I've paid Al for our meal—it was always on me, Frank, take your silly hand out of your pocket—and told him to clear the decks by one, and stand by to receive boarders."

"You don't seem too unhappy about it," Iris observed.

"Wouldn't want to ruin the birthday party," the Governor said, and made a sour face. "Besides, I think I've found

a good way out, and I always like that. Let's scram out of here."

They gathered up Sergeant Smith, and Al bowed them out the door scornfully, and they rode plushly back toward the capital. For the first half of the trip the Governor, under Reed's cross-examination, outlined his plans; then they were silent. There was something still disturbing the Governor, some random thought not pinned to the problem. Finally he secured it. "I had a talk a couple of weeks ago with Stevenson of Illinois," he said. "Stevenson told me the boys were winding up a big anti-gambling drive in his State, and having an easy time of it. Neither of us could see why it'd be easy, why any bunch of gamblers would quit so quickly. But I can see it now. They had another place to go. Sons of bitches," he said.

8

O'Connor's parties were outstanding social events: if the Queen of England had come to town for a reception on the night of O'Connor's party, everybody at the reception would have got to the party too. There were few people who did not feel that at some time, after some embarrassing public moment, they might not want a small favor from O'Connor. So he gave parties once or twice a year, as a gesture of irritation, and to them he invited at random from an immensely indiscriminate acquaintance. In the political and academic worlds, where wives were carefully trained to help their husbands' careers, this mingling of social classes was gladly accepted (for one thing, it spread the year's good stories); elsewhere it was worried about, quietly. Even those who most happily attended, however, drew the line

somewhere between midnight and one, when the wilder element came out of the booze joints, and O'Connor silently began substituting rotgut for good liquor. Late in the 1940's a city councilman had stayed late to brawl with a liquor-supply salesman over, literally, a waitress from a local stag club. Nothing about this incident had been published, even though one participant spent seven weeks in the hospital as its result; but it had supplied the story line for a skit in the next year's Spoof, the annual newspaperman's show, and the skit had driven the councilman out of the state; and since then elected officials had been careful to leave as the popular element entered. Now, a little after midnight, was the time: there was already a perceptible rise in the decibel level of the party, a certain shrillness in the air, as of a fire siren.

To Moss and Mimi, isolated still, together in the crowd, it was all the same; but to Mayor Field the difference was only too apparent. Without saying good-by to O'Connor, who wanted no good-bys, he grabbed his coat off the bed and darted through the packed living room, muttering constant excuses. He had come to his mayoralty through the same clean-up that had made Clelland governor, and he was generally though incorrectly assumed to be the Governor's man. He felt this public assumption as a responsibility exceeding the usual cares of office, and though he was not ordinarily a careful man nothing could have kept him one minute longer at O'Connor's party—except that he bumped into Irving Moss.

"Hey, boy! Where've you been?"

"All over."

"You happy?"

"Right now, I'm the happiest man in the world. Do you know Mimi Delanno?"

"Know her? I crowned her. Hello, Mimi." Mimi blushed. "Look, Irving, I hear you're working for Ransom again."

"Who told you that?"

"Harry, of course."

"Well, I won't deny it."

"It's none of my business, Irving, but you know what you're doing with Ransom, don't you?"

"He's paying me four hundred dollars a week."

"That's a pretty good price, but there's a limit to what it ought to buy."

Moss shook his head and smiled. "What's the matter, Ira?"

"Well, your father and I were pretty good friends. You know how it is."

"Sure," Moss said. "Forget it, and welcome me home."

"The city's yours. Don't forget to vote. Drop around at the office one of these days and we'll have a chat—off the record." A large, billowy woman roared past crying "Harry!" and Field shuddered. "I'd better get out of here before it's too late," he said, and scurried toward the door.

"Gee," said Mimi, "you know him pretty well, don't you?"

"He lived two houses down from us when I was a kid. He had a wonderful wife; I can't see how he keeps going without her."

O'Connor was with them again: "Why don't you write a biography of Field, talent scout? That's a great man—a real man of the people."

"Couldn't sell it," Moss said abstractedly. "Who's that

over there with Gloria—isn't that old Prof Hortstein, who used to play the flute sonatas with my sister?"

"It is. Old whistle-lips himself."

"I thought he'd retired to California."

"We invited him back for this week. He and that girl with him, Shirley Monahan, are playing with the college orchestra. Mozart's Concerto for Jew and Harp."

Moss swung behind Mimi up to O'Connor. "What was the point of that one, Harry? You know I don't like that sort of joke."

"Not from me," O'Connor said cheerfully. "You'd take it pleasantly enough from somebody else."

"Oh," said Mimi, "stop it, boys."

"You know perfectly well why I don't like it from you."

"No, I don't. I just know you don't like it, so I give it to you. Cut it out, Irving. It doesn't add to your social graces."

"I ought to put a hole in your face," Moss said unhappily.

"Okay. I'll go up and get my camera and take a picture of you—great character study—and send it to B'nai B'rith. Anti-Defamation Moss, always sticking up for his rights. Forget it, Irving, forget I ever brought it up. Take Mimi home. She wouldn't care if you were black."

Mimi blushed decently.

"Go on," O'Connor said, "take her home. There's a rough crowd coming. Mostly Irish. You wouldn't like them. Come on, Irving, enjoy yourself a little. Take Mimi home. She's a wop, she won't care."

Moss considered a moment, and it flashed into his head

that he was making a particularly dull fool of himself. "Sorry, Harry," he said. "But you started it."

"Sure," O'Connor said. "Get out, and I'll see you Monday at work. We'll go have a nice interracial drink together."

Chapter Four

THE Governor opened the side door to the capitol with his own key, and his self-service elevator deposited him in the leather-walled third-floor corridor that ran from his office to his private apartment. He walked down to the kitchen, turned on the light, and poured himself his nightly ulcer-preventative glass of milk.

"That you, Governor?" said a Negro voice from the room beside the kitchen.

"Of course it is, Jack. For God's sake go to sleep."

"You want to get up a little later tomorrow?"

"No. Seven-fifteen, same as usual. But you know I don't need you. I can make my own coffee."

"It wouldn't be fit to drink," said the voice sleepily. "Goo-night."

"Good night, Jack."

The Governor rinsed the empty milk glass in cold water and left it in the sink. He turned off the light and ambled down the long corridor to his large, square office, where he

gathered up the top half-dozen documents from a pile on the center of his neat desk. As he lolled wearily back down the corridor, the documents under his arm, the capitol clock announced midnight. He was, he thought, too tired to work; but his rule was work until one, and he kept his rules.

He dropped the papers on the easy chair in the corner of his bedroom and stepped out on the terrace that ran around the room's two exposures. Here, from the third floor of a building on top of a hill, he could see two-thirds of his city and a perceptible proportion of his state. He watched the cars snaking south along the four-lane highway he had built. Then, reluctantly, he stepped off the terrace and closed the door, picked up the papers and settled into his chair.

He read three of Reed's memos on bills passed by the legislature; and, following his assistant's recommendations, signed two and allowed one to become law without his signature. He studied the four-page draft of a veto on the sewer-authorization bill, clipped the automatic pencil out of his pocket and cut the message to four hundred words. There were seven memos from his secretary about the seven appointments scheduled for Monday; he put them aside for Sunday night. Then he read the confidential monthly report by the state Labor Relations Board and penciled INFO next to two warnings of strikes in the offing; by Wednesday night he would have the story. Now it was a quarter to one, and he knocked fifteen minutes off the rule. He undressed, threw his clothes into the laundry hamper, climbed into his pajamas, washed up, and at one o'clock sprawled over his large double bed to turn on the radio and catch the late news.

"*Haste*," said the announcer loudly, "*makes paste!* Yes, Haste, for years the nation's outstanding manufacturer of tooth powder, *makes paste*. If you've been using ordinary toothpaste, Hastepaste will come to you as one of the greatest discoveries of this marvelous modern age. No clogging on the toothbrush, no clogging in the teeth. And no ugly mouth odor—*ever!*"

An orchestra struck up blatantly in the background, and a husky voice sang:

Frankie and Johnny were sweethearts,

Lordy, oh how they would kiss

Then Frankie started to smell bad

And they lost their dream of bliss—

He was her man

(*What a toothpaste*)

But she done him wrong

(*Didn't use Haste*)

He was her man—

The Governor turned it off; the news, after all, would be in the newspaper.

2

The policeman came down the street toward them, and Kraus nudged Mancioni awake to start the car. The policeman looked at the car and Kraus reached over Mancioni's shoulder to turn on the road lights. The policeman blinked and shook his head; then, after another glance at them, stepped into the cigar store.

"Okay. Let's get out," Kraus said.

"We gonna give up, Chris? What's a matter? Can't we do the job? Did he spot us, Chris, did he?"

"Come on," Kraus said disgustedly. "Get out. Slow."

Mancioni took the car into the road and drifted past the cigar store; Kraus saw the policeman laughing with the pudgy clerk. They stopped for a light at the corner, and the policeman came out, nibbling at the tip of a long, black cigar. "That's it," Kraus said. "Take her a mile or so down and park her, Lou. And listen."

The light changed, and they rolled away. "This place," Kraus said, "is a cigar store, glass counters, with a little punk of a clerk running the show—I dunno who owns the game, he's just working there. We're gonna come in the front door, the clerk thinks you're gonna buy in the game, he's seen me and he won't be scared. We get a couple of steps in, I'm gonna throw down on him. He won't say anything, I don't think. Then all you got to do is go to a door right at the end of the alleyway behind the counter—only back door in the place—open it, and hold your gun on the guys inside. Don't say anything unless they notice you—which I don't think they will if you open it quiet. Park here."

Mancioni pulled to the curb and turned off the motor and lights, and sat concentrating. "Now," Kraus said, "I'll be working on the clerk, getting the bankroll from him, and I'll tell you to step aside when I've got the dough. You step up against the wall—remember that, against the wall—so you never get between him and me. Then I'll push him in with the tin horns, and we'll frisk the whole crew. I'd guess there's near to ten thousand in that little hole in the wall, Lou—eight thousand for me, two thousand for you. And all you got to do is hold the gun and keep yourself quiet. One thing more. If anybody does spot you, and looks like

he's getting panicky, you just say 'Stickup.' Just that one word, you got it?"

"Stickup."

"That's right. And, look, I don't want nobody killed this trip. If anybody looks like heading for you, fire one shot—one shot, you hear—into the floor. Not at nobody, just into the floor. That'll stop him."

"Two thousand, Chris?"

"By God, I think you got it," Kraus said happily. "You got everything I told you?"

"Sure, Chris."

"Okay. Let's get started. Remember what I told you. Take the next right turn, then right at the first corner, and back all the way beyond the cigar store, then right again and right again, so we pull up just behind the store. Just behind it, got that?"

"Sure, Chris. I got it. Two thousand bucks, Chris! Mary'll—"

"Will you forget about your wife a minute, stupid! Get started!"

They pulled up, and parked, and got out slowly, slamming the car doors. Kraus was first across the sidewalk, but he held the door open for Mancioni, and walked in behind. The clerk had a moment's elementary suspicion.

"Is that your—"

Kraus flashed the gun. "That's mine," he said. "Up. Up in the air."

The clerk lifted his hands high and looked silly. "You bastard," he said in a squeaky voice. "You—"

"Ah, hell," said Kraus. "Shut up." He turned to Man-

cioni. "You get over to the door, but don't open it yet. Keep your eye on fatty here."

Mansioni walked flatly to the end of the glass counter and behind it, to the door. "Okay, fatty," said Kraus. "One hand down. Punch the cash button on that register. Remember, my friend there can see what you're doing."

The clerk dropped his left hand and punched the button; the drawer shot open and clanged; and Kraus felt a muscle twitch in his gun hand. He cursed. "Is there any gun in that drawer, Lou?"

"No, Chris. No gun in there."

"Okay. You open that door, and make sure nobody comes prying."

"You can't open the door," said the clerk quickly. "You'll—"

"Open the door," said Kraus.

"But—"

"Open the door."

Mancioni reached for the doorknob, and the clerk dropped his right hand and flicked the switch on the intercommunication. "Coming," he said, and that was all he said, because the muscle twitched again in Kraus' hand, and the gun fired, and the bullet went through the fat neck, and the clerk fell to the floor, and was dead within minutes—a strange death, strange for a man who had received a dishonorable discharge from the Army for deliberate cowardice in the face of the enemy, who had never known a moment's conscious courage in his life, dying to do his duty by the cheap gamblers in the back room, to warn them that it wasn't a raid, that they mustn't try to bolt, that they were safe from arrest and publicity and ruin, from

everything but death. Kraus stepped forward to the dying man and the cash register, and at the door Mancioni faced into the long room, where the men were standing now around the tables and looking toward him, toward the gun in his hand, toward the sound of murder. Kraus reached his hand into the cash register, and Mancioni said, automatically, "Stickup."

"It's a raid," yelled Gus Forester from the far end of the poker table. "Let's get the Christ outta here!" He scrambled for the window, and in Mancioni's mind the instruction echoed: if anybody looks like heading for you shoot into the floor. They were running away from him, he had no instructions, something was wrong: they were running, the gimpy old man had a leg out the window: scarcely aiming Mancioni shot Forester in the hip, and all the men in the room bolted, some to the windows, some beneath the tables for cover, some toward him, some away, twenty-three men in danger of their lives, running out of control. He fired again (John Laney, forty-three, bachelor, grocer, shot through the spine and killed), and again (William Thompson, thirty-seven, married, criminal record, no visible means of support, shot through the right shoulder, condition hopeful), his unpracticed hand guided by some idiot skill, again (Randolph Lewis, twenty, college student, shot through the aorta and killed), again (Francisco Valenta, sixty-one, furniture worker, shot through the right kidney, condition critical), again (Virgil Lee, Negro, twenty-nine, union officer, shot through the left thigh, condition hopeful)—six shots, a man for every bullet, before Kraus grabbed his arm and pulled him, firing at shadows, struggling, away from the door and back through the store and across the sidewalk

to the car (Kraus pulled him, Kraus who had never split fair, or helped any other man at risk to himself, distracted now by all the shooting and the blood). They staggered into the car, the first of the gamblers stumbling out behind them into the store, and they heard the police siren on the street.

"They'd get us sure. Run!" said Kraus, slipping out of the car and up the sidewalk ahead of the police, looking for the alley.

"Stop!" Muffled by the police-car windows, the shout scarcely carried to the gutter. "Stop or I shoot!"

Kraus ran stumblingly on, peering ahead and aside, around and about, the gun still in his hand; and the heavy police slug caught him from the side, just above the sinus, just below the eye, and killed him instantly. The police car stopped, and Mancioni, running across the street, got past, into the blessed shadow.

3

The day doctor at the fifth-floor maternity ward of the Mary Hospital was an interne; the night doctor was a fully qualified, experienced general practitioner. This reversal of common values came partly from the hospital's desire to hide the night doctor, who was senile and mildly alcoholic, and had never been much for medical progress when young and sober; and partly from the doctor's desire to hide himself in the most shadowy of available sinecures. A widower with three grown children, none of them a doctor, his sole ambition was to keep himself inconspicuously alive and kicking until the arrival of the inevitable; and work among the friendless poor was a guaranteed way to avoid publicity. He no longer bothered about his competence as a

doctor; he did what he considered his best and did not flatter himself about successes or curse himself about failures.

His great terror was the Caesarean section. The state required that this operation be performed with the consent and in the presence of another doctor; and, besides, the night doctor's memory of the Caesarean was clouded with deaths and the dank air of danger. He had heard of new skills that made the operation relatively safe, even when it was performed upon the same woman for the third or fourth time; but he did not have such skills, and therefore did not wholly believe in their existence. As a result, he was greatly disturbed on this evening when the interne turned over to him the case of Mary Pickford Mancioni, warning him that the Caesarean might be necessary.

At such a time the night doctor, scratching in his dirty gray beard, remembered all the phrases he had uttered to convince patients that Nature was benign and would heal. He fluttered around the bed of the dying woman, darting out into the passageways on occasion to call another doctor, to set in motion the machinery of the Caesarean, then panicking before the dank danger and returning to the bed to hope. In this manner he passed the time between six and midnight, when he suddenly realized that the child was dead and the woman at the edge of immortality. He rushed to his telephone to call the assisting doctor and then the stretcher room and the operating room, and the priest.

The priest administered the last rites of the church to Mary Pickford Mancioni as she was wheeled to the operating room, the night doctor sucking in his unpalatable breath and muttering of unthought terrors. They placed her

on the operating table at approximately the time that her husband was opening his gun on the gamblers in the back room behind the Good Old Days Cigar Store. By then, of course, she was dead, and there were other cases waiting for the use of the operating room; so they sent her downstairs to the morgue.

4

It was not a difficult case. Within fifteen minutes of their arrival at the scene the police had several thorough descriptions of the second gunman, and though the descriptions were of several different men, experience gave the detectives a sound composite picture. Half an hour after the incident some forty patrolmen, their guns in their hands, were stalking through the streets and alleys of the eighth ward, peering into doorways, prodding at shadows, calling to each other at the intersections, reporting every ten minutes to headquarters. Detectives from the stolen-car detail had identified the Pontiac; detectives from the fingerprint identification bureau had lifted fifteen handsome sets of prints from various surfaces; detectives in the records department had given a complete history of Kraus to a group of slavering reporters. And less than fifteen minutes after the start of the organized search a young detective from the homicide bureau, checking a side street seven blocks from the Good Old Days Cigar Store, heard a sound from a parked automobile and opened the unlocked door to arrest Luigi Mancioni, who was curled up on the back seat, his gun on the floor, his hands clutching his knees, crying, "Mary," crying, crying, crying.

The engines were racing down the street, and church bells were ringing, goddamn what a waste of time, and the alarm clock was sounding strangely, on and off; and the Governor woke up snorting and rolled over and reached for the telephone. It was a genuinely private number; no more than five people knew it.

"Jesus Christ," he said as he got the phone up to his ear.

"Not yet," said the mechanical voice. "This is the Holy Ghost."

"What the hell is the matter with you, Frank? At this hour!"

"No, no. Just exhilarated by trouble, not really ours. All awake at this hour."

"Well, what is it? What the hell is it?"

"Three-twenty-five. And the trouble—a gambling house between here and Eastham, in the city limits, got shot up two hours ago by a couple of hoods. There's four dead, including a student at the University—"

"Ooof."

"—and four wounded, including Gus Forester, who will, perhaps unfortunately, recover. There's no possible question about whether the house had police protection—not that there could be much question anyway—because the survivors saw the cop come in and smoke a cigar about twenty minutes before the shootings."

"What about the killers?" the Governor said, switching on the night lamp and pulling his feet around to sit on the edge of the bed. "Get away?"

"No. There was a patrol car up the street, coming run-

ning, and one of the hoods got shot—he's one of the four dead—and the other one was picked up maybe half an hour later."

The Governor flexed his big toe and looked at it. "Have you got a death list?" he asked finally.

"Nobody much," said Reed. "Just the student, a Georgia boy named Randolph Lewis. Otherwise there's a grocer named John Laney, middle-aged bachelor; the small-time thief who ran the game, name of Alan Smith, probably not his real name; and the killer, he had a record, named Christopher Kraus. He's an import from Pennsylvania. The other killer, Mancioni, is a local boy, village idiot type, no record that the reporters could find. Which reminds me, Billy—don't you think we might get Ira and his police department to let us know when this sort of thing happens? I found out about it because one of the *Chronicle* boys guessed we hadn't heard and thought we might be interested."

The Governor was squinting through the light at the window that opened up on his peaceful city. "It is," he said slowly, "what you might call interesting. Ira's got this idea that he's some kind of jellyfish if he doesn't act independently all the time. What do you think we can do, Frank? Anything?"

"Billy, it's city business. I think we'd better stay out of it as far as we can stay. I just hope it doesn't make a stink connected to The One Spot, with my money in it."

"That doesn't much worry me, Frank. But we can't say it's city business, not ours. Ransom'll murder us if we try that one. I just don't know if Ira can carry it—Ira could

walk under water for a week and never know he isn't breathing. He's got to move just right here. Perfectly."

The phone was silent, and then Reed said, "You know him better than I do, Billy. I always thought Ira knew his way around."

"That's still another problem," the Governor muttered. He looked at the electric clock, which said 3:35, then wriggled his toes again and looked at them and at the gray-ing hair on his legs. "I'm thinking fuzzy," he said. "It's not the right hour for clarity. Right now I think we'll have to let Ira manage it his own way, because we can't force him. But I don't know. Thanks for calling—I'll sleep on it and maybe we can talk intelligently tomorrow."

"See you," said Reed, "in church."

"Oh, God," said the Governor. "Yes." He dropped the phone on its cradle, switched off the light and rolled over onto his stomach on the bed. "Wait and see," he said aloud, and then he was asleep.

Chapter Five

THEY arraigned him in night court, and fingerprinted him, and took him back to a cell and on principle beat him around the face until he fell, then kicked him until he rose and pushed him onto the bed. He asked them incoherent questions, but they would not speak to him. They were working quietly, teaching the killer a lesson in case the Law by some strange chance forgot, and they thought they had seen stranger. Then they locked his cage and left him alone.

When they came back the next morning they knew his wife was dead, and they knew what sort of a man he was, what was wrong with him and why he had become a killer. He was awake, staring at the bars in the gray light through the high gray window, and they were gentle with him.

He asked, "How is Mary, how is the kid, is everybody all right, what about Mary?" and they told him the truth, and then they waited by the door to the cell—three big, awkward men in blue, awkward uniforms—until he could speak again. He asked, "What did I do, did I kill any-

body with the gun, what did I do with the gun?" and they told him the truth again, simply because it was the truth, and then he had nothing else to ask, he didn't have the sense to be selfish, so they waited awhile and then they went away.

One of them saw the magistrate and made arrangements for the next day, to send him out under an armed guard to his wife's funeral and the funeral of the unborn child. Another went to the home of a florist who was also a book-maker, and arranged for a wreath at the grave, because nobody else was going to be sending flowers, and certainly not the killer. The third drove out of town with the social worker and picked up his three children, and brought them to the city, dirty and squawling and stupid and incurious, to the Catholic orphanage.

Then the three men met again and ate breakfast and talked about it, the stink there would be in the newspapers, the trouble for Macrae, the patrolman whose presence had protected the game, the sergeant who had protected Macrae, the lieutenant who had protected the sergeant, the captain, the inspector, perhaps even—it was now almost a pleasant thought—the Chief. The three men were not afraid; they had at one time or another got good information from every bookie and every crap game under their protection, they were not grafters, and everybody knew the police could not work without information. They talked about the killer, half insane in his cell, and the chance of his copping a commitment, the lawyers who might represent him, the judges, and hangings they had seen. They talked about him sorrowfully but without embarrassment, and they congratulated each other on their behavior, the fundamental

justice of their actions, including the beating, and the answers, and the errands of mercy.

Then they went home to tell the story to their wives and send their wives to church while they slept the sleep of the strong and just.

2

The wind blew a leaf rattling against the window screen, and Irving Moss realized he was awake. The sky was brilliant light blue, the air was cold but soft; from the hotel kitchen downstairs came the random sounds of breakfast. Moss looked around the pleasant, clean hotel room and sighed contentedly: he was, in a way, home.

The bed stirred beside him and he looked affectionately at Mimi, whose long hair made golden decorations on the pillow. He looked at her affectionately and thought of a young, rich, enormously able reporter he had known at the *Paris Herald*, a young man who had gone to Athens on an assignment and there picked up a gorgeous black-haired girl of Greek descent, on her vacation from Ohio State. He had picked her up and, because she was simply touring, he had toured with her around the sacred places of Greece and Turkey and Palestine, then chucked his job and toured some more in Cairo, Capri, Rome, Venice, Geneva, and back to Paris. "She's marvelous," he had told Moss, "just marvelous. The two months with her have been a glorious bath in champagne"—he was young and rich and romantic—"but one thing worries me. One thing. If she could talk I'd marry her, but I don't know if she can talk." Nevertheless, Moss thought gloomily, he'd married her.

He looked again at Mimi, a little less affectionately but

still with pleasure. Today he would have dinner with his sister Iris, clever and charming and superficial, supper with his sister Helen, his baby girl with her baby boy, now four years old. He whispered a generally directed curse, and Mimi opened her eyes and looked at him and smiled, and closed her eyes again. He sighed.

The Sunday paper slapped on the carpet outside the room, and he looked affectionately at Mimi. There was news in the paper, there was always news in the paper, and he ought to read it because tomorrow he would be working. He hung for a moment on the edge of decision, put a foot out of bed toward the newspaper, then looked affectionately at Mimi, and reached out an arm and brought her over. She opened her lovely eyes and looked at him again and smiled.

"I like you," she said.

3

Bang went the alarm and ough went the Governor, thrashing his feet between the sheets, muttering incoherent threats into the pillow, but committed not to turn the damn thing off until he was fully awake. He reached out his right hand for the button, and it hesitated, waiting until he sat up and brushed his left arm against his left eye and said, "All right." His right hand turned off the alarm.

He lowered his bare feet to the rug—he had given up slippers less than a week after his separation from his wife—and padded into the bathroom and turned on the light. The tiles were unusually cold under his feet, and he hopped gracelessly onto the Turkish-towel rug before the sink. He looked into the mirror on the medicine chest and worked his

mouth with distaste, noticing for the first time the snappy black-and-gray pajamas he had worn all that week. Jack chose his pajamas; he would have to remind Jack again of the gubernatorial dignities he was required to achieve.

He ran some water into his mouth and out of it, brushed his teeth, yawned and examined the fillings in his back teeth, ran his hand through his gray-white hair, yawned again and turned on the shower, carefully, to lukewarm. He dropped his pajamas, bent and picked them up and tossed them into the laundry hamper; he looked down at the hair turning white on the skin still tight over his chest, flexed his arms, and stepped into the shower. It was a little too cold; he turned it to warmer and stood, thinking of nothing, under the insipid spray. Without looking for it, he reached out his arm and took his washrag from the rack, and, in short, showered.

As he maneuvered his body—he thought he looked fatter in the shower than he was, then admitted that he looked thinner in clothes than he was—the door to the bathroom opened and a sleepy Jack, himself in pajamas and bathrobe wholly dignified and somber, deposited underwear and stockings on the table.

“Thanks, Jack.”

“Scrambled?”

“ ’Sfine. Anything in the paper?”

“Yes, sir. Big gambling game holdup out on the Eastham Road.”

“Oh, Jesus, Jack. I’d forgot. Thanks.”

“Right, Governor.”

The Governor turned off the water in the shower, shook himself and stepped out, reached out without looking and

gathered in his bath sheet, and dried himself—but now he was thinking, worrying about Ira Field.

Field had come from nothing, and he was going nowhere—that was the problem. He had been a poor boy, he had worked his way through law school at night, through a clerkship with the worst shyster in the state, up to a respected practice among small businessmen. As a lawyer in the state capital, working for small businessmen, he had inevitably become a lobbyist, and from lobbying he had gone to politics, because he had enough money, more than he had ever dreamed he would make, and he was liked. But he was in his sixties, and he was mayor as a favor to his friends and a favor to himself; he might want to stay as mayor until he retired, but that was the limit of his ambition. And because he was not ambitious he was no good at quick decisions: there were too many factors to be weighed, too many friends to be consulted and considered.

The Governor believed profoundly in the importance of quick decisions. To solve a political problem he needed only the facts; given the facts, his answer would be almost instantaneous. He judged by two considerations—which course would be popular? which course was right?—interwoven by his belief that the right course would in the long run be also the popular course. He was a historian, he knew that in the long run we are all dead; but he believed that the political long run was always a matter of months, or at most a year, that no political party could successfully attack a man for a decision made on principle. So he permitted his ambitions to guide his judgments, and felt a reluctant contempt for the contented, amiable Field, whose judgments were slow and insecure.

From the moment he had heard of the gambling problem at The One Spot he had known how the Governor's office must handle such a situation: it was necessary that he know. Scandals, in the Governor's world, did not arise spontaneously from the venality of officials; they grew from problems which the chief executive, the co-ordinating center, had not solved with the necessary speed. Field would have to act now, would have to act quickly; the Governor's hands itched for the telephone, but instead he buttoned his suspenders and went to the kitchen to eat his breakfast, and check his facts.

Except on formal occasions the Governor ate breakfast at a table set by the large kitchen window, sitting so that the light of morning came over his left shoulder, so cleanly, so brilliantly that even the newspapers looked clean, and brilliant, and honest. At the table every day were both local papers, air editions of the *New York Times* and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and three dailies from downstate. He read the local papers and the *Times* as carefully as time allowed, skimmed the others when he could, and occasionally marked passages to be clipped and filed. When he was through with the papers they went to Reed, who had on his staff a girl—the Governor had never even met her—whose sole job was to read newspapers, and clip them, and produce digests of editorials and columns.

So the Governor, already dressed for the day in his gray tweed suit and white pique shirt and four-in-hand and brightly shined shoes, drank his orange juice and read the paper, and ate his eggs and read the paper, and drank his coffee and read the paper while Jack cooked and served and started on the dishes. The Governor took from the local

papers the facts about the robbery and murders on the Eastham Road, and beat them to a batter in his head, adding slowly his thoughts about Field; and when he had finished the rest of the local news (Rotary votes merit badge, Automobile Club asks superhighway, Mothers demand fence at railroad crossing, Clelland dedicates new ag-school barn) he knew he would have to call Field. Leaning his chair back from the table he took from his vest his grandfather's silver pocket watch; it was still too early to call Field. He turned to the *Times* and pencil in hand skimmed through the unwieldy news section. Jack put another cup of coffee at his elbow, and he muttered thanks.

The telephone rang in the Governor's office at five minutes after nine, and Jack trotted in to take the call. He trotted back. "Sergeant Smith, Governor."

"I'll speak to him." The Governor started to his feet.

"He said not to bother you, Governor. Said just to tell you that he'd done his job and there wouldn't be no more gambling out at The One Spot, like you said, and you shouldn't worry about it."

"Good," the Governor said. "Good." Jack was a little resentful of Sergeant Smith, had been of his predecessor and would be of his successor; Jack considered that he was good enough bodyguard for anybody. The Governor smiled to his paper: Jack would be a little too good a bodyguard. He had been a butler all his working life except for five years in the state penitentiary, served for manslaughter perpetrated in a knife fight in a bar on his night out. The Governor had taken him right out of the penitentiary when his term was up, partly because he had heard well of the man, partly because he was pressing a campaign for the

employment of ex-convicts. Jack was not proud of his time in the jug, but he did feel it had proved him a man, more of a man than any college-trained son of a state cop. Still, if the Governor thought no, well, the Governor knew what he thought.

By nine-thirty the Governor was finished with the *Times*; that was enough. He stood up, and looking out onto the capitol lawn he rolled the muscles in his back, swung his head around in an eccentric circle, then stiffened to dignity and patted his hair. Another day had begun; he turned to the kitchen door and started toward his office. As he reached Jack he said with a ritual grin, "Good morning, Jack"; and received, with a ritual grin, "Good morning, Governor." He clipped the automatic pencil back into his breast pocket and with a ghostly whistle strode vigorously down the hall.

4

Iris Reed was always the last at the breakfast table, never exactly late but never exactly on time, either. Her husband and her son, unless her son had risen especially early and got an especially early breakfast from Manitoba, were usually midway in the daily eggs or the Sunday flapjacks by the time she appeared, in her tailored bathrobe and her tailored face, with her aqua, orange or white snood over her hair.

Not that her neatness was ever noticed at breakfast. By the time she arrived her husband was deeply imbedded in the news section of the paper, and her son, who ate with single-minded ferocity, was looking at nothing but his food. Sometimes she got a murmured good morning from some-

body, but usually she simply sat at her place, leafing through the comics, the sports section or the society section—none of them even momentarily interesting to her—or talking to Manitoba, or looking ruefully at her husband's sloppy pajamas and unshaven face, or counting the cars on the street outside, or warning young Billy not to eat so fast, or, on bad days, simply waking up.

This Sunday, however, Reed, to apologize for the early morning telephone calls, noticed her entrance and immediately handed over the first section so that she could read the complete story of the previous night's disaster. While she read he thought about the Governor and Field, and wondered why Billy should think Ira incapable of handling the situation, and wondered how he would handle the situation if he were Field.

Iris turned to the continuation and skimmed quickly over the details of Kraus' criminal career, of Mancioni's hopeless life and senseless bereavement; she put the paper down before finishing the story. "My God, but it's ugly," she said.

"It's all of that," Reed said.

"What? What's ugly?"

"A crime, Billy. A terrible crime that happened last night," his mother said.

Billy looked at his thoroughly swabbed plate, considered for an instant the inconsiderable chance of seconds, then followed off on the other line of thought. "Dick Tracy!"

Reed gave his wife a grimace and said, "All right. Dick Tracy." He took the comics to the couch and Billy jumped onto the seat beside him. He read aloud, with occasional

help from his son. Iris read the news. Manitoba cleared the dishes. Traffic picked up on the street outside.

"What'll they do to that poor little Italian?" Iris said finally. "That Mancioni."

"Oh? I don't know. If he's insane, of course, he'll go to an asylum—but my guess is that he isn't, so he'll stand trial. There's no question that he's guilty of the clearest sort of first-degree."

"Will they hang him?" Iris said, and her son pounded on the ignored paper.

"Now, wait a minute, Billy, don't rush. They won't hang him. His motives were too human for that. Also," he added cheerfully, "we've got an electric chair now. But they won't kill him."

"Can't the police stop these gambling houses?"

"Not so long as damn fools like your husband put up money to build them."

"Has that been worrying you, Frank?"

"Well, a little. Not much. It was all an accident, and the way Billy handled it Ransom can't touch us. Which reminds me—I'd better call and see if it all went by plan."

"No! You read me the funnies!"

"Right you are, son, if a little loud. Right you are."

Reed read aloud, and Iris read the news, and Manitoba washed the dishes. When the comics were finished, young Billy, living up to his part of the bargain, dropped down from the couch and waded into the kitchen to pester Manitoba. Reed felt his blond beard, got lazily to his long legs and took a look at the kitchen clock. "Ouch," he said.

"Do you have to go to church today?"

"Well, you know, Billy's got to go, and I think I ought to go with him."

"Why the hell does Billy go?"

"He can't very well get out of it. He's the governor of the state, you know."

"And," she said, but it was a question, "he wants to be president?"

Reed stopped and blinked. "That really isn't in it, honey. It isn't. If Billy doesn't go to church he insults people. It isn't for one Billy Clelland to decide," Reed said, patiently now, "that all past public policy is wrong, that people shouldn't go to church. And if public policy—mind you, he doesn't make it—says people should go to church, then he's the governor, he's got to go to church. So I ought to go with him. Hell, I even believe there's a God. Look, I've got to shave."

"Well, get back early," Iris said. "Irving's coming for lunch."

"Is he going to behave himself?"

"I think he'll be okay—he isn't seeing Helen till tonight."

5

Sunday was a good day to work; except for the girl at the downstairs switchboard and random tourists in the west-wing gallery the capitol was deserted: no typewriters, no appointments, no traffic on the driveways and damn few telephone calls. Eight hours' work on a Sunday was worth three other days and nights; besides, it was in its own peculiar way relaxing.

The Governor spent each morning going through the mail that had got past his secretary and Reed, penciling answers

on some of the letters and when necessary dictating to the silly little microphone that stood on top of his desk. The letters were mostly requests for his time: could he address the November 12th conference of the state bar (yes); would he see the first cousin of a councilman in Springfield, and give the boy advice (yes, make an appointment for him); would he write an introduction to a new book, *The Intellectual in Politics*, by Professor Gottfreund (Jesus, no); would he come to New York, expenses paid, to appear on a television interview program (no); would he come to New York to address the December 28th meeting of the National Education Association (a moment's thought, then yes); would he go downstate December 17th to address the national convention of the Women's League to Save Civilization (next to this one Reed had penciled CLEAN, but the Governor wrote no).

Now he had finished the first stack of letters, and the obligation registered, and his hand moved for the telephone as though switched to position. He asked the operator to get Mr. Field, then started on the next stack of mail: petitions from various towns for the honor of the new state-police barracks. Hollyrood, up in the northern part of the state, had already been selected in a meeting of state-police commanders, party executives and legislative luminaries; the Governor skimmed over the whereases and therefores and be-it-resolveds, then flicked on the Dictaphone.

"To the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, Kiwanis or what the hell have you of whatever town submitted the petition, Dear Sirs—look at the top name on each petition, and if we know him give him a Dear John—I am grateful for your interest in the new state-police barracks comma and sincerely sorry that it has been found impossible to

locate the new headquarters in your community period As you know comma the northern three counties of the state comma because of their very low density of population comma have not previously had a state-police barracks semicolon but this year comma with the extension of the turnpike and—”

The telephone rang; he switched off the Dictaphone and picked up the receiver. “Mr. Field, Governor,” the operator said, and then Ira was on the phone, querulous and a little worried. “What’s wrong, Billy? Something wrong?”

“All I know,” said the Governor gently, “is what I read in the papers.”

“What? What, Billy? Oh, that stickup down on the Eastham Road. That troubling you?”

“Well, I’m not what you might call happy about it,” said the Governor. “What do you plan to do?”

“I don’t see there’s anything I can do, Billy. I talked to Chief Farrell this morning, and he said he’d give a press conference this afternoon and explain the whole thing.”

“You going to the conference?”

“Why, no, I’m not planning it. Thought I’d head out to the lake and paddle my canoe.”

“Sure Farrell can handle it?”

“Hell, Billy, he’ll do all right. It’s nobody’s fault——”

“What’s got into you, Ira?” the Governor said nervously. “Half a dozen people got shot up last night at a gambling game in this city. Do you think the cops don’t know every gambling game in town? Somebody’s head has got to fall for this one, and you’ve got to do the chopping.”

“All right, Billy, all right. Farrell can handle it.”

The Governor held the telephone at arm’s length and

looked at it angrily. Then he put it back to his face and said, calmly, "I just called to warn you that I'm holding you responsible for handling this business, and I'll expect you to handle it right. I know it's not your fault. Maybe it isn't even Farrell's fault. But we're all in a lot of trouble about it."

"I'm sorry, Billy, but I think you're all upset about nothing. Who's going to make the trouble? Nobody I know."

"Do you know Ransom?"

"Clarence wouldn't do—"

"But maybe he would, Ira. Look, I don't want to get rough about this. But you've got to get yourself and your administration in the clear, or I'll put my administration in the clear, even if it's at your expense. That's why I called—I thought you'd better know it."

There was a brief silence, and then the Governor heard Field's dry giggle. "Billy," Field said, "it's like the deacon said to the call girl—I can't admire what you do, but I can't help liking the way you do it."

The Governor cast a suffering glance to the ceiling (there were light brown patches on it; must check for leaks and get it cleaned), then said, "All clear, Ira. No grudges?"

"No grudges, Billy. You know me—I never hold grudges. See you soon."

The Governor went back to his work: there was nothing more he could do for Field, and perhaps Ira was right, he would know by tomorrow. He was fifteen pages into the public utility commission's quarterly report when the telephone rang again. It was Hofmann, calling from an emergency meeting of the faculty.

"Sorry to bother you, Billy, I know you must be very

disturbed about this business, but we want your advice, I think you'd like to be consulted, too."

"Shoot."

"The Lewis boy, a junior here, is dead, and Forester's in the hospital, and two of our other boys are material witnesses of that thing, and we don't know what to do about them. I've talked to the parents of all three boys. Lewis' people are of course in terrible condition about it, but they're coming here to take the body away, and the funeral will be down in Georgia, where he came from, so I don't think we have much to say about that. I don't know how I'll talk to those poor people."

"It wasn't your fault, Wesley."

"It was certainly somebody's fault," Hofmann said. "What do we do about Forester? I'd like to fire him for taking the boys to that—that sinkhole."

"By all means," the Governor said. "Just make sure he gets severance pay and anything else that's coming to him, so you don't make him some kind of martyr. Something like this ought to rub off all the glamor."

"And the kids?"

"Leave it up to the parents, and let them devise the punishment. They'll be stern. I think, keep the University out of it. The moment you go around disciplining these kids—and they weren't doing anything, remember, except breaking the law—you take some sort of a responsibility for letting them out. No. Just tell the papers you're leaving punishment to the parents."

"You'll back me on it if the legislature or the Regents complain?" Hofmann suggested.

"Do better than that," the Governor said encouragingly.

"I'll see to it there isn't much of a squall. But I'll do that whatever you decide, Wesley."

Hofmann sighed. "Thanks," he said. "I knew you would. I just wanted to hear it, you understand."

"Don't mention it," said the Governor. A car honked outside. "Everything considered," he added, "I'd better get to church."

"Enjoy yourself," said Hofmann. "And thanks again."

The Governor pushed back his chair, abandoned his office, glanced at the mirror in the hall and straightened his tie, then stepped into the kitchen. "How's the weather look to you, Jack?"

"I don't think you'll need any coat at all, Governor."

"Then I won't wear one. Could you do me a favor while I'm gone?"

"Anything you say, Governor."

"Get Al Helio on the phone. If he won't come to the phone tell whoever answers that the Governor meant what he said. Just that. Just that the Governor meant what he said."

"That's easy, Governor."

The Governor smiled. "I'll have harder work for you one of these days, Jack," he said, and raised his right hand in a political gesture, and left.

Chapter Six

ON THE Governor's desk when he returned was a Manila envelope addressed in an indelible pencil, in angular, angry printing, to Governor William Clelland, Statehouse; without a return address; delivered by Western Union; and sealed with yellow tape. The Governor tried to open the envelope too quickly, and had to start again. When finally he got at its contents he found two pages of lined paper ripped from a schoolboy's cheap notebook. On each page was a list of names printed with the same waiter's pencil in the same angry lines.

Colonel Perry Nickerson, Commanding State Police . . . Major James Gilligan, Counties Liaison Chief . . . Captain Donald Key . . . Sergeants . . . Troopers . . . The Governor turned to the next page and read five names he had never seen before. He turned the pages over, hoping vaguely for some formal accusation, some bill of particulars; they were, of course, blank. He held the two pages high over his desk and let them drop, sliding and shivering, to the

hammered leather. He walked to the window and sat up against the sill and watched the clouds blow by.

His mind ran to remedies, devices, plans, until there were no more plans and another part of his mind was working, asking him why in the hell he wasn't angry. One of these men—Nickerson—he knew well, and Nickerson had betrayed the Governor, personally, as well as the people and the people's state. Chief Farrell was one story: he had been an inexpensive ward politician promoted into the city government for services rendered. Nickerson was different: a career man, a college graduate who had gone into police work when it wasn't fashionable, a co-founder of the state-police college. It was disgusting that Al Helio and Al Helio's friends had bought Perry Nickerson, a big, powerful man of forty-five, at the height of his abilities, with a wife and three children and a job which paid him twelve thousand, five hundred dollars a year. What did Nickerson want with bribes? Why should Nickerson sell out?

Why, on the other hand, should he assume that Helio was telling the truth? Helio might have any of a dozen grudges against Nickerson—a bribe offer might have been made and refused, hell, even a speeding ticket might have got Helio mad enough to try to ruin the colonel, commanding. Helio had reason to be angry, anyway, this morning. The Governor stood up from the windowsill and returned to his desk: that was the trouble with allowing anger to muddle thought, what he needed was a plan that would avoid publicity, get rid of the guilty Nickerson and keep the innocent Nickerson—a plan to give the maximum of justice, quickly, with the minimum of trouble. He doodled

on Helio's list—a large triangle, bisected; the two resulting triangles bisected again; the four triangles bisected; the eight triangles—and then he picked up the telephone.

“Outside, please,” he said, and dialed Reed's number. Reed answered the phone. “Hello, Frank,” the Governor said. “Look, can I drag you away from your family for some important business?”

“Not until after lunch, unless it's powerful important,” Reed said. “We've got Irving here, you know.”

“I'd forgot. Give him my love. After lunch will be all right—and I'm sorry to drag you out then, but it is important.”

“I'll come over a little after two. What's afoot?”

“Helio delivered those lists. One of them is just a group of punks, or maybe they aren't punks and I don't know them, but the other list has some names on it. Nickerson and Gilligan, mostly.”

“Gee. I'm sorry to hear that. What do we do?”

“Well, yes. Let's go over that later. Get a secretary out of the pool, too—we'll have to prepare some documents.”

“Anything else?”

“A lot else, but I've got to move fast. I'm going to call Sergeant Smith and have him get his gang of wreckers together again. Have them pick up all the fry on the police list and bring them here. Then I'll call Nickerson and Gilligan, get in touch with them somehow, and ask them to come to a meeting, in my office, tonight at eight-thirty. I guess you'd better plan on having dinner here, unless you want to run home for a quick bite. Any way you want it. Then I want to call state police H Q and have them put the names of all these punks on the teletypes to all stations.

Ask patrolmen to pick them up on suspicion of running a gambling house, and hold them, no rough stuff, until they hear otherwise."

"What if they get lawyers?" said Reed. "This is all pretty high-handed."

"That's what we need," the Governor said. "A real high hand. If they look like getting writs, we'll have the judge call me. I think I can manage that."

"Are you sure, Billy?"

"Oh, hell, no, I'm not sure. But I think it's the best bet. Come to think of it, maybe you'd better not give brother-in-law my love. He's done some remarkable guessing, that boy."

2

Harry O'Connor had been concertmaster of the University orchestra for nine years, though outside the orchestra only a few people knew that he played the fiddle. He did not talk about music, he did not practice when he had company, and he kept his violin behind a bridge table in the corner of a closet. Nevertheless, he was a violinist, and an extremely accurate one: his mother had dreamed of seeing her Harry a violinist, and had forced him to practice three hours a day through his childhood; and for some reason that he cursed three hours a day through his childhood, he had been born with perfect pitch. By the time he was well into high school, however, he had learned to enjoy his luck, and now it was a pleasure far beyond picture-taking or party giving to rehearse twice a week with the University's boys and girls. Even on this Sunday, after that Saturday night and the nuisance of kicking out the last

Virginian at five in the morning, he was ready with his fiddle in the music auditorium at one-fifteen, sounding the perfect A. He had stayed sober the night before only to be sure that he would not miss this afternoon.

He was not, however, his usual chipper self; he was annoyed. The rehearsal was scheduled to last until four, but he would have to leave at quarter to three to cover a press conference at police headquarters. He did not know and did not care what the conference was about; but he had been ordered to it, and he knew better than anyone else that his safety as a character, as a wild and free artist with a camera, as the crazy O'Connor, rested on everyone's certainty that he would arrive on time to earn his income. The desk had called, and he would be there; it was an annoyance, not a matter to think about.

A little of the usual chatter seemed missing when he took his ear from the perfect A and listened to the sounds on the stage. Attendance was better than the Sunday average—nearly eighty of the wooden folding chairs were filled—but the kids were quiet; the quiet extended even to Professor Hilario, who usually supplied a string of entertaining Andalusian curses as he adjusted the strings on his cello. O'Connor looked around a second time, then shrugged his shoulders and went back to his place. He rested the fiddle on his knee and set the folded scarf at his neck; then he reached out his bow and flipped open the top score. He had expected the Mozart Flute and Harp Concerto; it turned out to be something else.

He turned to his partner at the score, an amiable young senior with ambitions to composition, but the boy merely looked up to the podium. O'Connor followed his glance and

saw their conductor, Professor Malcolm Bayson, talking distractedly to one of the boys from the wind section. "Nobody will take his desk," Bayson said. "Just leave it empty." The boy nodded and picked his way back through the cellos, and Bayson tapped his music stand.

"I imagine all of you know by now," he said, "that Randolph Lewis, who was second flute in this orchestra, was killed by a gunman last night." O'Connor turned sharply to his partner, who waved him away without looking. "In Randy's memory," Bayson said, "I have asked the librarian to distribute the parts of the Haydn Symphony in B-Flat, Number Eight or Ninety-Eight, and we will play the slow movement at the start of each concert this week as a memorial to our friend and colleague."

Bayson paused and bent over his score; O'Connor's partner flipped the next page with his bow and pointed to the start of the second movement. "What's the story?" O'Connor hissed.

"Tell you later."

"What's the story for Christ's sake? I've got to know it."

The senior threw him an angry look. "Shut up."

Bayson was scowling at them, so O'Connor lifted his violin to his shoulder and waited attentively. "Many of you played this piece with us at our last concerts in the spring," Bayson said, "and I don't expect it will be too much work for you. We will take it a little more slowly on this occasion, remembering that it was written shortly after Haydn learned of Mozart's death, and that it opens with an extremely somber melody orchestrated in the manner of Mozart's own Masonic music. It is difficult for the

horns." He turned to the horns. "Would you like to try it first, gentlemen, to get a start?"

The horns sounded somberly in F, and O'Connor turned again to his partner. "Now, what happened?"

"He was in a poker game. Somebody shot it up."

"Anybody else?"

"Just Forester, from here—he got wounded. Some other people, I don't remember them. Christ, can't you get away from your filthy profession for a couple of hours a year?"

"No," said O'Connor, untroubled; but the boy was right: it could do no possible good to louse pleasure with business.

3

The court psychiatrist, tall, thin, impressive and bald, was eased into Mancioni's cell shortly after Sunday dinner. Mancioni lay on the wooden cot, his face to the wall, his eyes on the wall, his mind empty and inactive. The psychiatrist sat down in the high-backed wooden chair set against the bars, opened his notebook and took his pen from his coat. "Now," he said.

Mancioni may have heard him; but he did not move.

"I'm here to help you."

The psychiatrist crossed his legs, reached down and brushed a fleck of dust from his shiny black shoes. He looked at the notebook again: *prisoner slept, ate breakfast, ate well at lunch; talks little, seems stupid, may be in shock*. A fall fly dropped in through the window and circled slowly around the cell. The psychiatrist watched it. Mancioni did not move.

"I'm not going to stay long," the psychiatrist said. "But you must answer some questions."

Somebody laughed in the precinct room just beyond the cells. An automobile whined to a sudden stop; then started again. The fly settled into Mancioni's ear, rose waxily, and dropped to the worn gray blanket. A dish was broken in the kitchen. The psychiatrist stood up, placing his notebook fussily in the center of his chair, and walked to the bed. He reached out his hand and turned Mancioni from the wall; the blank black eyes moved to his face, then away. The psychiatrist shot his hand at the eyes, and Mancioni's head wrenched aside. "All right," the psychiatrist said. "I don't want to hear your act. Save it for the jury. Right now you can talk."

"Nataalk," Mancioni mumbled. "Nataalk Mary." He looked up at the psychiatrist, opened his mouth wide, then turned his head away.

"Close your mouth," said the psychiatrist. "God damn your murdering soul, I don't get paid to spend my Sunday hours in here with you. Why did you go to that cigar store last night?"

"Money," Mancioni said, "Mary gonna have baby—what happen—Mary baby—*They tell me truth?*" He pushed himself up and locked his elbows behind him and stared at the psychiatrist.

"I'm afraid they do," the psychiatrist said brusquely. "Your wife is dead. Do you understand that?"

Mancioni nodded.

"Do you understand what you did last night?"

Mancioni nodded again.

"Do you understand that it was wrong, what you did last night? Do you know it was wrong?"

Mancioni nodded again.

The psychiatrist turned his back on the prisoner and picked up his notebook. "All right, son," he said, "you can lie down." Mancioni dropped back onto the blanket and turned again to the wall.

"Keep your nose clean," the psychiatrist said.

4

The press conference was held at police headquarters in the Chief's office, a long, narrow room at a back corner of the building. The Chief's heavy mahogany desk stood before the back windows, and from just beyond the door to the desk ran a heavy mahogany conference table surrounded by chairs. Pictures of police reunions, police communion breakfasts, police baseball teams and individual police heroes hung glassed and framed on the dirty rose-pattern wallpaper. Narrow planks of wood running the length of the room made the floor; dirty plaster and two high, dirty glass chandeliers made the ceiling. The windows were dirty and closed; the room was already smoky.

The reporters, fifteen of them from all over the state, filed in at three o'clock and sat at the conference table and waited. O'Connor, whistling the last notes of the concerto, took a position beyond the table by the Chief's desk; and when the side door opened he stopped the Chief and his two Assistant Chiefs with a blast from an oversized magnesium flash. Farrell, a short, thin, almost wizened man, with his few brown hairs slicked carefully over his wrinkled scalp, gave O'Connor a heavy-lipped smile and went to his desk. The reporters remained seated; the Assistant Chiefs stayed in the doorway.

"Good afternoon, boys," said Farrell; his voice was

nasal and a little shaky. "I know you're all godly, and I'm sorry to bust up your Sabbath for you." He tried a chortle, then settled for a smile. He got nothing.

"Do you have a statement, Chief?"

"About last night, that, that, shooting?"

"Any statement you got is jake with us."

"I dunno that it's a statement, boys, I just hope it tells you what you want to know."

"Swell," said Moss. "What is it?"

"All you boys know what happened last night, I guess." He looked down the table and up the table: everybody knew. "So I guess you know there was a patrolman, name's Macrae, who was sort of working with the gamblers. Now, I dunno that's true, but that's what the evidence seems to be, I guess. So I guess you're interested in Macrae?"

"Sure."

"I've suspended him," Farrell said proudly. "There'll be a ninvestigation, and if we find it's true what we think, then he'll be booted from the force. Maybe something worse can happen to him, it all depends on the investigation." Farrell took on an air of earnestness, and O'Connor caught it with the flash.

"Where else is your investigation going to look?" said a man from a downstate paper.

"Where? Oh, I see. I guess they'll look into the situation. The whole situation."

"What situation? That one gambling game, or all the others, too?"

"Why, I don't know nothing about any other gambling game." Farrell was bewildered now, and scared: O'Connor

caught him again, twisting his hands on his desk. "Why do you boys think maybe there's other gambling games?"

There was a general laugh which Irving Moss conscientiously resisted. As Farrell looked at him he permitted himself a slight frown at his comrades' frivolity. Farrell had a bad memory: he gave Moss an unhappy but friendly smile. Moss leaned forward over the conference table.

"Chief," he said, "I'm just back in town a couple of days, and I don't really know anything about local conditions. I'm learning, that's all. But in my experience it's rare that you have only one gambling game in a town of seventy thousand people. If you've got one you're likely to have others."

"Maybe you're right," said the Chief. "Maybe you're right."

"Then perhaps," said Moss persistently, "it might be wise to have an investigation of the entire force, to see if any other patrolmen are tolerating gambling games on their beats."

"The patrolman doesn't live who could cover a gambling house all by himself," said the AP stringer, a youngster. "This investigation better go into the brass, or it won't save anybody's skin at all."

Moss gave the AP boy a pitying look and Farrell brightened slightly, setting off another flashbulb. "That's why we're gonna have a ninvestigation," Farrell said. "We've gotta know things like that. We wanna keep a clean force."

"Of course, Chief," said Moss. "Now, on the question of the other games—if there are any. I can understand your bewilderment when asked about them. I'm sure up to last night you didn't know there was a wheel anywhere in town."

"That's right."

"It's not your job anyway," said Moss, and a few of the older reporters held their pencils tensely over their notepads. "You're not a detective or a cop, you're not supposed to look for such things. And certainly—" Moss laughed lightly—"you're not a gambler."

Farrell laughed mightily. "Among friends, like we are here, I'll admit to a little friendly acey-deucey now and then at home. But that ain't gambling, now, is it?"

"And in your normal day you wouldn't even have much chance to run into such a thing," said Moss. "You're married, you've got kids, you're a homebody—I'm just explaining it as I see it, because I don't think we've been giving you a square shake. You don't go out much at night, do you?"

"No, hell no, you know that. I've never gone out much nights. . . ."

5

"Just sit wherever you think you'll be comfortable, Miss, uhm——"

"Hollyfarm," said the girl, who was twenty-five and a frizzled redhead, and wore a suit and chewed gum because she was trying to break herself of smoking.

"Fine," said Reed. "My name is Frank Reed, and that gentleman standing behind the desk goes by the name of William Clelland. He will be happy all day, because he works Sundays anyway. You and I may grouse."

Miss Hollyfarm sat down a little harder than she had intended to sit, and stared wonderingly at Reed. Reed sat down himself, and slid low on the overstuffed leather chair,

kicking a footstool halfway across the room. The Governor smiled at him but was not happy, knowing from experience that Reed clowned only when disturbed. The Governor added up the causes of disturbance: The One Spot incident, the shootings last night, probably a bad lunch with Irving, possibly some worry about right now; he had reason to be disturbed. The Governor smiled again.

"Miss Randalls made money arrangements with you, didn't she?" the Governor said. The girl nodded. "And she also warned you that you might be here after midnight?" The girl nodded again. "She didn't tell you why because she didn't know herself—we merely told her that we would need a secretary who was very efficient and very discreet, so you should be complimented that she chose you."

"Yes, sir. Thank you."

"Well, you're here because you're discreet, and I'm going to ask you not to talk to anybody—not even to the boy friend—about what happens here today. It isn't going to be easy, because I think the results of this day will be all over the state tomorrow, but you'll just have to tell people you don't know. Is that all right?"

"Yes, sir. I know when to shut up."

"Fine. Then I'll tell you everything, so you won't have to try to interpret what you hear later. I have reason to believe that some of the highest people on our state police force were bribed by gamblers to close their eyes to the operation of a gambling house at a night club known as The One Spot. I don't have proof, but the charges were made by somebody who was certainly in a position to know. It would not be easy to prove the truth of these charges, and any attempt to do so might involve the discredit and

demoralization of our entire state police force. Such a result would not be in the best interest of the state, and I hope to avoid it. To this end I've summoned the men involved, including Colonel Nickerson, two other highly placed officers and a number of troopers, to a meeting in this office. At this meeting I shall lay the charges before them, and give them the alternatives of an honorable resignation from the force or a thorough investigation of their activities. To make such an investigation possible I've ordered the arrest and detention of certain professional gamblers also mentioned by my informant. The choice will then be theirs, and I hope with all my heart that if they're innocent they'll undertake to face the investigation. It's a cruel and very rough justice, and I don't expect you to approve of it, because you aren't sitting in the very difficult position behind this desk. But I will expect you not to talk about it, whatever the result."

"I won't, sir, honest I won't. And I think it's shocking, sir, that a man like Colonel Nickerson would take a bribe."

The Governor smiled. "Let's wait till we have proof, or some sort of admission from them. And then let's not talk about it. In the meantime, I'll want you to take down resignation statements so they'll be available to anyone who wants to resign. And I'll also want you to take down, verbatim, everything that is said at the meeting tonight, so that nobody can ever misquote what was said. That's where your efficiency comes in—it's very important that you be entirely accurate. We'll give you time off for coffee, of course, and we'll feed you a good dinner here, and we'll expect you to interrupt whenever it gets too fast—that ought to keep tempers steady, anyway. It's a big load for

one girl, but two girls would just double the risk of a leak. Do you think you can handle it?"

"I can try, sir."

"Well," said the Governor, "that's wonderful."

Reed was still slumped in his chair. He waited to make sure the Governor was finished, then said, "By the way. Keeping quiet isn't going to be any feather pillow. If anybody ever finds out you were here—and there's certainly a chance, since you do have parents and so forth, that somebody will—you'll have newspaper reporters on your door every day for a month."

"Just don't let the boys worry you," the Governor added. "They may look like sex maniacs, but they're not." He glanced at Reed, who shrugged. "All right," he said. "Let's get started on that statement. Let's see. Try 'Dear Billy, Since the start of my connection with the state enforcement agency comma my first concern has been the efficiency of the force as a whole comma and my contribution to this efficiency period.' All right as a start for Nickerson, Frank?"

"Let's see where we go."

"'In recent weeks I have noticed certain signs that this efficiency comma which has been my pride comma has been deteriorating comma for reasons unknown to me period Whatever the reasons comma I am the commander of the force and must take responsibility period Therefore comma I feel that the time has now come when another man can better perform the duties of the colonel comma commanding comma and I offer you my resignation period.' Still all right?"

"Better keep going."

“Well, we need a little more. Try, new paragraph, ‘I must insist that you accept my judgment of the situation and this resignation period. There is a limit to the length of time that any man can afford to be a public servant’—I think that’s a good touch, don’t you—‘and recently I have received several attractive offers to which I in all loyalty to my family must give consideration of a sort that I could not were I to remain an official of the state enforcement agency. . . .’”

6

The road ran straight fifteen miles through farmland past great green squares and clean handsome houses, and fifteen miles through forest broken by clearings; then it turned north and ran beside the river twelve miles to a place where the river widened and to Lakeview, a small city that within the memory of adolescents had been a town. The growth and decay of its central streets had forced its best established residents out to clusters of new houses, most of them built along the river north or south of the city. One of the clusters had grown almost to the proportions of a suburb, and given itself a name, New Harbor, and some airs. On a small rise at the edge of New Harbor stood a string of seven new houses, all compact and well equipped and well appointed; and the sixth of these houses, counting toward the city, belonged to a Mrs. Helen Adams, a widow whose husband had left her with a trust fund but also with a baby.

Irving Moss drove up to the house and into the driveway; he put his hand on the horn, then took it away, stepped out of the car, and started up the gravel path to the front door.

As he was reaching for the bell the door opened and a tall girl with soft, sandy hair, wearing a soft sweater and a soft skirt, jumped into his arms, crying, "Oh, Irving, Irving, Irving, God, how long it's been!"

They were almost the same height; when she pulled away from him they looked at each other on a level, then up and down, and then they embraced again. "How's my baby sister?" said Irving fatuously.

"You can stay all night and just listen, and you won't hear a word of complaint, not from me, not from Paul."

"Not a word?" Irving said.

"Not a word. Come on, meet your nephew."

On one side of the hall was the living room, on the other side the dining room, both furnished neat and French. The grand piano stood well out from the corner of the living room, and behind the piano, catching the last rays of the afternoon sun, a blond and blue-eyed boy of four was playing traffic cop with three spring-wound automobiles. He looked up as Irving entered, but he was obviously a little disappointed.

"Come on, Paul. Meet your Uncle Irving."

The boy watched the last car smack to a stop against a leg of the piano, then crawled on his hands and knees, under the piano, to the center of the room. He stood up. "Hello," he said.

"Hello," Irving said; he had never got the hang of children; he treated them as adults, because he knew no other way to handle them, and they often treated him as a child—which could be awkward. "Did your mother tell you about me?"

The boy nodded soberly. "You're my uncle, you're

Mama's brother and Aunt Iris' brother, and I don't have any sisters or brothers and Mama doesn't think I ever will."

"Would you like to have a sister?"

"Maybe, if she was like Aunt Iris. Not much if she was like you."

"You couldn't have a sister like Irving," said Helen, laughing at both of them, "because Irving's not a girl."

The boy considered this answer briefly, then nodded with some satisfaction. "That's right," he said. He turned to his mother. "Are you going to play the piano for Uncle Irving?"

"Yes, I am. Would you like to hear me play the piano?"

"Yes."

"Let's wait," Irving said. "It's been so long, and there's so much to talk about, and I want to hear you talk."

"We can talk after dinner," Helen said; Iris had called, and she knew how the lunch had gone. She knew what her brother wanted to say, and she was willing to hear it, but not while the boy was awake. "You know me," she said pointedly. "My small talk is all in the piano." She ran a scale and stopped. "Will you let me pick the program?" she said.

"Sure."

She played Hadyn and Schumann and Erik Satie, she played a child's sonata by Mozart and a countess' sonata by Schubert. Irving sat on the couch and looked at her and looked at the figures on the Oriental rug. There would never be anyone so beautiful as she was, never again, there would never be anyone so peaceful, so capable of happiness. Her eyes were clear and flat with the thoughts

of music; she was surprisingly honest. Anyone could know what she was thinking merely by looking at her, and when she spoke she had something to say, she meant what she was saying. It was impossible to him that she was his sister, so much more impossible that she had been Billy Clelland's mistress, much more impossible still that he had abandoned her, for any reason, for any thought, for any ambition or any future.

Behind the piano the child played quietly, sometimes listening, sometimes winding his toy cars, holding them to him to hush the clicking. He was a handsome boy, he had her honesty in his eyes; but his eyes were blue, deep as Clelland's eyes were blue, and his face was long and his forehead wide, and he held himself with that touch of stiffness, which was something more than pride, that was the final mark, the counterseal, of Billy Clelland.

He could not watch the boy, he could not listen to the music, all of it contented and innocent. Once he thought he would interrupt her, but she caught his eye and stopped him; once he thought she would break off to ask him a question, but she merely paused and smiled, the full lips breaking in the round, soft face, and then resumed. How wonderfully she played, he thought, how wasteful that she plays only here; and he never thought that she was still practicing, that for her the world was much the same, and she had never allowed herself pity for anybody. Then she stopped and closed the piano and stood up and looked at him with her transparent honesty; and shocked, he saw that she was happy; and he wanted to cry, he felt the smart in his eyes.

"Now, none of that, Irving," she said. "Was it good?"

"The best I've heard in four years' traveling," he said.
"The very best."

She was pleased, and she gave him a moment's gratitude. Then she turned to Paul, who was standing by the piano, tapping at the highest keys. "Next month Paul is going to learn to play himself, right, Paul?"

"Yěs. But I won't be as good as you are."

"Maybe you will, some day. Right now it's time for dinner. Time past, as a matter of fact. Come on into the kitchen, Paul, so the cooking will give you an appetite."

The boy followed them into the kitchen, which was blue and stainless steel, and had a freezer and a washing machine and a drier and a dishwasher and a garbage-disposal unit and a refrigerator and a composition-top table and four chairs and an all-electric stove and a blower fan and an air-conditioning unit. "You just look at it," Helen said to Moss. "It takes some time to get the full magnificence."

Moss sat at the table and looked at it. "Where does the money come from?" he asked finally.

"From the bank," she said. "Why don't you talk about yourself? You've been doing much more interesting things than I have. Please."

So he talked about himself and about Europe, and mentioned Mimi and O'Connor, and as she turned from Paul's dinner to their own, adding a half a cup of wine to the casserole in the oven, he told her that he had taken a job with Ransom.

"Why?" she said, and Paul looked at both of them in turn, and then again.

"He's paying me four hundred dollars a week."

"Is that all?"

"No."

"Were you really all over the world?" said Paul.

"All over the world," Irving said. "I was even in Russia, where nobody goes any more."

"Then why did you come back here?"

"Because I wanted to see your mother again."

"Is that all of why?" the boy said, disappointedly.

"No, it isn't, really," Irving said. "You see, Paul, I was born here, and this is my home, and I like to come home once in a while."

"And that's all of why?"

"I think that's all," Irving said ruefully.

The boy looked to his mother, who said, "That's all of why for tonight, anyway. You ate late, and now you're going to bed."

"What's the time?" the boy said.

"It's ten minutes after seven," Helen said, "and that means you won't be asleep until seven-thirty, which is perfectly reasonable from your point of view. All right?"

The boy cocked his head on one side and considered. "All right," he said finally. "Uncle Irving can come, too."

"Thanks, Paul," Irving said, and followed mother and son up the stairs to the boy's bedroom, where he sat on a three-legged stool, looked and listened as the boy undressed, got into his pajamas, washed up and finally climbed into bed. He said no prayers.

"Now, you go right to sleep," Helen said, "because tomorrow you're going to want all your senses about you. Eileen and I are going to take you and Timmy and Steve out to Harris Hill and feed you a picnic lunch and show

you all the trees changing color and the birds packing to go south. Anyway, you're tired, aren't you?"

The boy nodded on his pillow. Helen reached into an open cupboard by the window and took out a nightlight which she plugged into a socket in the floorboard near the door. Then she turned to Irving. "Do you want to go to sleep, too?" she said.

"Not yet," he said. "I was just thinking about picnics we used to go on when we were kids."

"Typical bachelor thought," Helen said. "Say good night to Paul and he'll say good night to you."

"Good night, Paul."

"Good night, Uncle Irving."

"I'll see you soon, boy."

"Uh-huh. That's fine."

Helen turned out the light and they left. "Good night," the boy said again.

"He's a nice kid," Helen said to Irving in a low voice. "I'm pleased with him twice as often as I'm mad at him."

"He seems like a nice kid," Irving said.

"In a lot of ways he's like Billy," Helen said.

Helen led him to the kitchen, gave him a large silk tablecloth and pointed to the silver drawer and the glassware cabinet. "You set the table," she said. "Wine glasses. By the time your clumsy hands are done my long, delicate, muscular fingers will have finished dinner."

She was exact; as he moved the last glass to its artistically proper position on the round table, she walked in with two plates of chopped chicken liver and egg. "Pâté de la maison," she said, "à la Moss. Mama gave her recipes to Iris, but I stole some."

They ate, they drank a bottle of Chablis, and they talked about the time when they were children. There was eight years' difference in their ages, but it seemed, looking back, like much less: there was such a variety of experience that nobody else had shared. They worked up in time, to Irving's first job and his first success, and Helen's first years at college, first public appearances at the piano, first prizes in music—and then they stopped. Helen said, "Iris called me today after you left."

"Did she?"

"Yes. She did. You'd upset her pretty badly, you know."

"I'm sorry. I meant what I said."

"Irving, Iris doesn't know me well. We're too much of an age, we never understood each other, we were just friends and we loved each other and worried. You can disturb her about me, because you always knew me better. I want you to promise that you won't do it again."

"Why did you tell me, earlier, the boy was like Billy?"

"Because I hoped that would tell you everything you had to know. I'm happy, Irving, and you mustn't tell Iris I'm not just because you think I can't be. You're wrong, and you've got to stop."

Moss felt himself trembling and held his hand out over the table and watched it vibrate, and looked at his sister who was looking at him. "Let's clear the table," he said.

"No. That can wait. The boy's asleep. Let's talk it out."

"Everything can wait," Moss said, and stood up. "Tell me. Tell me why you're happy."

She closed her eyes and ran her left hand over them, and touched her wedding ring with her right hand. "I've got my home," she said, "and my child, I love the child,

and I want for nothing except Billy. And I know he still loves me and wants me to be with him, and I love him. Someday, I don't know when, he'll be with me again. Is that enough?"

He was trembling again. "What makes you think that? Why don't you think that he got you, and got you pregnant, and left you and bought you off with this house and the money—and never thinks of you now from one month to the next. Do you see him, for God's sake? Do you hear from him?"

"No, I don't hear from him often. It wouldn't be safe for him. Or for me, or Paul."

"Don't you ever think about what you've given up—the chance of playing that piano all over the world, the chance of an honest marriage, and a child that's legitimate and open and above board and doesn't have to be hidden, the chance of an open existence with friends of your own choice?"

"No. You're talking too much."

There was acid in his eyes again, and his voice was choked: he knew he was talking too much. "Why do you hang on to him this way? You could go to New York, away from him, and marry some decent man your own age, and have some kind of a life. Why don't you? Why don't you let him rot?"

"Because I love him and he's coming back. I'll be a long time without him, because I'm twenty-six years younger than he is, and women live longer than men anyway. I'll take these few years now, too, because I must take them. I wish he were here, Irving, every day I wish

he were here. I don't deny that. But I don't wish I were anywhere else, just that he were here."

"Why? Tell me why, just tell me."

She touched the wedding ring again. "Nuts, Irving," she said. "I love him. He's a great man. Irving, do you think he approved of what happened between us, that this was some kind of seduction? Do you think he said he couldn't live without me, or such nonsense, or used some adolescent flattery to rob me of my virginity? What do you think?"

"Go ahead," he said.

"It was important to him that he could come to me and talk, and I knew what he was saying, and I could play for him and give him pleasure. I don't want to play for New York—I want to play for Billy. I want to see all the kindnesses he's thought about but makes appear instinctive, all the firmness when I'm unreasonable, all the love, if you want the word. We know each other, and I'll never know anyone so well, and I need that."

"Do you know why he abandoned you and the child?"

"He didn't know I was pregnant when they gave him the nomination. I knew it, but I wouldn't tell him—I had to know he made his own decisions. Do you understand that? When he asked me if I would be willing to wait I said I would, and by the time he learned about the child he was so committed to so many people, me included, that he couldn't back away. I know he thinks about me, whenever he has the minute to think, because I know what he looked like when I told him about the child. That was a horror for both of us, and I couldn't be sure, then, that I was right; but after that week he told me why I had kept

it secret, and I knew I'd been right. You see, he was ambitious, and I knew that and wouldn't wish him changed."

Irving was crying openly now, standing, his weight against the heavy sideboard, his foot kicking at the deep carpet. "You were"—he stopped and pulled himself straight—"you were in his way, so he kicked you aside—you, the—"

"Oh, nonsense, Irving. You're reasonably famous now, lots of people would know they'd heard your name somewhere. You ought to understand it. There's no shame in an honest ambition, honestly expressed, honestly acted. Don't you think I know it? Don't you think that, sitting at the piano, I've thought about ambition, and fame, and playing for a million people and being remembered after I'm dead? That's a nobility, Irving, not a shame—if you're great enough for it."

"But you gave it up."

"I found something that meant more."

"He didn't find it."

"It meant as much to him as to me, Irving, but he's got more to be ambitious about. Don't harm him, Irving. I know you can. It might bring him back to me sooner, but it might change him, too."

"Don't you think ambition's changing him?"

"I hope not. Will you try to harm him?"

"All I can," he said, and was frightened at the satisfaction he felt.

"You're working for Ransom?"

"Yes."

"All right," she said, and felt the soreness in her muscles from having kept in one position too long. She looked again

at her brother, and stood up, her eyes level with his. "Don't hate my happiness, Irving," she said.

"No."

7

The worst of it was over. They sat around now in their shirtsleeves, nine civilized men of varying intelligence trying to find a sensible solution to a problem. The Governor looked over the two pages of doodles that his hand had contributed to the occasion, parallelograms and sharp triangles, and listened to Nickerson.

"I'm not admitting a thing, Billy, not a thing. I just want to get all the details straight, so I know just what the offer is. If I do resign—just as a matter of record this is—if I do resign, what about my pension?"

"You'll get it," Reed said, and the Governor added a doodle. "You haven't been convicted of any crime, Perry. We're not punishing anybody. We're just trying to keep the state's collective good name."

One of the troopers puffed noisily, lighting a cigar, and said, "What about us? We get our pensions, too?"

"Of course," the Governor said. "My God, I'm being unfair enough as it is."

Major Gilligan, who was sprawled sideways on one of the leather chairs, scratching under his shirt, looked up with a new interest. "Just how unfair do you intend getting, Billy? Let's say we resign, with those flowery letters you wrote for us. Tomorrow a batch of reporters pops out of the oven asking questions. What do you say?"

The Governor waited to let Miss Hollyfarm catch up. "I tell them the truth, Major—as much of the truth as I

can. I'm not going to say you were accused of anything, but I am going to say that I discovered gambling going on at a roadhouse out of town, and felt that the top officers of the state force were responsible because if they were running the force efficiently it wouldn't have happened. The same applies to everybody here tonight—all I say is that the job wasn't being done efficiently, and that's true enough whether or not anybody was taking a bribe."

"In other words," Nickerson said, "if we resign we'll be admitting a kind of misconduct."

The Governor waited again, then said, "I don't see how you get away from it. If you're clean, then by Jesus you ought not to resign. You ought to face the investigation. Otherwise you're not being fair to yourselves and—not that it matters a hell of a lot—you're not being fair to me. Look. Public policy demands that the people of this state respect the state police. They won't respect the state police if they discover that top career officers have been taking bribes from gamblers. Rather than risk the discredit of the force I'm willing to let men who have been taking bribes get off without any kind of punishment; but any one of you who has no fear of an investigation, no worry about what can truthfully be said about him, owes it to the public to stay on the job. I'm not a judge on this case, and I'm not going to rule on whether anybody's guilty of anything. But I'll assume to myself, for any personal anger I may wish to store up, that any man who resigns took a bribe. To me, that's chapter and verse. I've said it four times now. I can't say anything more."

"That's square enough for me, Governor," said the trooper, pointing his cigar. "I quit. I got word from Helio

before your lily-whites picked me up—he's left town. And I'm all set to clear out myself. I got mine."

Nickerson and Gilligan were on their feet, heading for the trooper, who was willing if not eager; but Sergeant Smith stepped in front of him.

"Get this worm out of here," Nickerson said.

Smith looked to the Governor, who nodded; and the trooper said, "Wait a minute, Colonel. Are you scared I got proof?"

"Get him out!" Gilligan yelled.

Smith took the trooper's arm and led him to an ante-room. Miss Hollyfarm looked inquiringly at the Governor; he said, "Scratch all that." Reed picked up one of the resignation letters on the Governor's desk, and walked out behind the trooper. The Governor doodled an angry square and waited.

"Who gave you your information, Billy?" Gilligan said.

"I'm not telling you that."

"We've got a constitutional right to know," Nickerson said.

"You'll know if you stay for the investigation. Then you'll be on trial, and you'll have your rights. You're not on trial now."

"What the hell is this meeting if it isn't a trial?" Nickerson said. "You're asking us to ruin ourselves and our families, and we don't even know what's happening, why you're after us."

"Maybe," the Governor said.

"Can't you give us till tomorrow?"

"Why?"

"You insist you've got to know tonight?"

"Not tonight," the Governor said. "But before you leave this room. Either you're innocent, and you've nothing to be worried about, or there's something that won't bear looking at. Perry, why make it a game?"

"What do you want us to do after we quit—if we quit?" Gilligan said.

"I don't know. There's probably room for you in business. From all I've seen you're both competent organizers."

"What about me?" said the captain commanding the district in which the club had operated. "I'm a police college graduate, nothing more. Where do I go? What reference do I get?"

"You get no reference except the record. And the record shows that a gambling house was operated in your district, and you resigned. You can put the best face on it you can, and we won't contradict your story—unless its discreditable to somebody else. You know all this. I've made it clear."

"Why, Billy?" Nickerson said, stepping forward toward the Governor's desk, wheedling. "Why do it to us? You know it can't happen again."

"I don't know anything," the Governor said. "I just think. And I think nobody can be sure it won't happen again. I also think it's not a story you can keep a secret so long as somebody gets a political advantage out of revealing it. This way nobody has anything to gain by talking. Keep asking if you want, Perry. I've thought it out, and I've got answers."

"You're an inhuman bastard," said Gilligan.

"Scratch that, too, Miss Hollyfarm," the Governor said, and drew a ferocious quadrangle. The side door to his

office opened and Jack peered in: worried, the Governor thought, that Gilligan might be doing something. Jack looked appealingly at him, and he shook his head. Jack shook his own head, and held out the early edition of the *Chronicle*. "What is it, Jack?" the Governor said irritably, and Jack darted nimbly in and dropped the paper on his desk. Up top was a black banner headline:

DON'T GET OUT MUCH—FARRELL
COULDN'T KNOW ABOUT GAMBLING

There was a photograph of Farrell simpering with pleasure, and the caption was, simply, *Homebody*. The by-line on the story was Irving Moss.

The Governor's face turned color, and he began muttering quiet obscenities. Reed was back now, and he ran to the Governor's desk. Finally the Governor regained control.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I don't have any more time to waste on you sons of bitches. Are you going to sign or not?"

Nickerson could see the headline. "Lot of police jobs going to be open in this state," he said. "Maybe you better fill them with clergymen."

"Sign," the Governor said. "Sign those statements and get out of here, and get out of this state if you can, because that's what's smart. Now what about it—yes or no?"

"We'll sign," Nickerson said, and his eyes clouded. The Governor saw him only through a red fog of rage, but he realized again, for the first time since that afternoon, the personal tragedy he had demanded. Yet even while he was sorry for Nickerson the best part of his mind was with Field, and Farrell, and the scandals that seemed to

build upon him and drop upon him like some fantastic suspended tower that reached to infinity and had to be balanced by guess. "Gordon!" he called, and Smith appeared in the high main doorway. "Take these gentlemen out and give them pens. Let me know tomorrow whether they've signed or not." He turned to the corner. "You may leave now, Miss Hollyfarm," he said more easily. "Mr. Reed will sign your overtime slip tomorrow morning."

Somebody said something, but the Governor had shut out from his senses everything that might happen in that room. He grabbed the two sheets of doodles in his fists, crumpled them and tore them and threw them at the leather wastebasket, and shoved the basket under his desk.

"What do we do?" Reed said.

"We keep firing people. We keep firing people until we've cleansed this state with fire, if that's the only way. My God, Frank, how can they do it? Don't they have any feeling for public decency?"

"I guess not," Reed said calmly. "What do we do?"

"Field," the Governor said. "I told Ira we'd hold him responsible. Frank, you'll have to do it for me, I'm not able, not tonight. Call Ira and tell him he's through—he's not running for re-election—and he's got to fire Farrell first thing in the morning. Then get hold of somebody—I guess Warrenson of the state police college—and have him recommend some top police experts to staff the state force and to take over the chief's job here. Anybody who'd serve as Farrell's assistant is too stupid to handle it."

Reed was prowling back and forth before the Governor's

desk, his back bent, his knees buckling and locking. "It's all right on Farrell. Why Ira?"

"He's responsible for Farrell. He let the chairman of the city committee talk him into Farrell. Nobody could make him appoint a ward politician police chief."

"Jesus, Billy, Ira's clean."

"I hope Ira's clean," the Governor said, and slumped down in his swivel chair.

"What's that?"

"I didn't mean it just that way," the Governor said. "But let's not be too innocent about Ira. I've known him for years, and I like him, but he owes a lot of people favors—as witness Farrell."

"I don't get it."

"Do you know how Ira got his start? I do. He was a factor—he discounted notes for small business at damn high rates. There's nothing wrong about it, there's nothing illegal about it. It serves a function—it keeps small businesses going—and the man who lays out the money runs a pretty considerable risk. But he's got to collect on the notes, and he collects how he can. He's got toughs working for him, and blackmailers, and other people you wouldn't care to meet on a dark street. It's a filthy business. Ira was in it. He got out, and he built a solid law practice, and I trust him. But he's responsible for Farrell, and Farrell, when you look at it straight on, is largely responsible for four people dying last night. And we can't know how many other Farrells there are on his staff. Now do you see it?"

"I see it," Reed said slowly, resting his weight on the desk, "but I still don't like it. I respect Ira."

"I respect him, too. I don't want him disgraced. Look.

There's a vacancy on the state supreme court, coming due in December when old Hastings hits seventy-five. Ira can resign to make himself available, maybe quote to escape from the administrative entanglements of the mayor's job. Would you feel that's better? You've told me Ira's a sound lawyer, and there's no danger of his doing favors there—we've got six other judges on the bench."

"It's a ruthless business, Billy, whatever you do. And I can't see the state needs it. And it's a bad way to pick judges."

The Governor stood up and flexed the muscles in his back. "I want Ira out before his administration starts a scandal that'll crack our administration. That's all. I think that's a danger. He's up for re-election in four weeks, so it's easy to get him out. I know it's ruthless, but look at that headline—you know where Ransom goes from here, and so do I. Ira's out."

"Billy," Reed said unhappily, and stopped.

The Governor walked around the desk and raised a hand to Reed's shoulder. "I know just how you feel, Frank. You want to know whether I'd go on this way if there were no such job as president of the United States. And I can't answer you, because there is such a job. But on this sort of problem—and God save us if we have any more—I've got to believe that what's good for the state is good politics, what's good politics is good for the state. Public confidence, Frank, public confidence—in the state and in me. Which comes first I'll never know, and neither will you. If I ever believe in my heart that it's me first, I'll tell you, because you'll want out, and I'll want you to get me out.

My throat's sore—tonight's been worse than speechmaking. You'll call Ira for me, won't you?"

"Yes. I'll do it."

"But you still think I'm wrong?"

"I still don't like it, but I still think your judgment's better than mine."

"Then you're sure to be wrong one way or the other," the Governor said, and grinned. "So you're committed. You'll do it tonight?"

"I'll call him right now."

"Fine. I warmed the chair for you. Let me know what happens—I'll be washing up."

"He won't fight," Reed said. "Ira's not a fighter."

The Governor was at the door. "And let me know whether any of our finest didn't sign, if you can."

Reed leaned back in the Governor's chair. "They all signed," he said flatly.

"Yeahop," the Governor said. "I guess they did. Good night."

"Good night, Billy," Reed said, and began to dial.

BOOK TWO

Chapter One

TINSEL decorations and a blighted mistletoe still hung from the gaudy Arabian ceiling in the main ballroom, but the atmosphere was not festive. Christmas was two days past; the strike was twelve days old. The ballroom had been divided in two by an old folding wooden wall hung on a track and made soundproof with draperies. In one half-ballroom sat the representatives of Local 41, Laundry Workers Union of America, CIO; in the other sat the representatives of the County Laundry Owners Association. There was no door between the two halves, the wooden wall was unbreached; all communications went around the wall, out of the ballroom and through the hotel halls. Mediation was being attempted.

It was dull. The mediator spoke to one group and received answers, usually monosyllabic, occasionally Anglo-Saxon; then he went to the other group and received equivalent thanks. After a while the large groups on either side began to break down; rotating committees were

formed to pester the mediator in two small, separate rooms, while the delegates in the ballroom took to bridge, pinochle, poker, canasta, casino, gin, samba, hearts, and the scaling of playing cards into an upended Homburg. Through this atmosphere the mediator, trained at Cornell, earnest and honest and able but no longer confident, moved with progressively slower steps until finally he called Frank Reed and suggested failure.

A strike is important to many people, and this particular strike was particularly important to the state government. Public and private hospitals, state and city, had run short of linen in its third day (the legislature, extensively bribed, had specifically forbidden the establishment of state-operated laundries in the public hospitals, and private pressure had kept the private hospitals in line), and by the fifth day exhausted nurses were judging the sheets by degrees of foulness. A bright young prankster at the college had brought up the idea of a cholera epidemic, and rumbles of denunciation of the union were rolling from Ransom's presses. Meanwhile the public was jittery and the hospitals were unclean; and in the hotel ballroom the negotiators wore through deck after deck of cards.

The meetings had started from a union demand of twenty-eight cents atop the present scale of ninety-eight cents an hour; a week's vacation with pay; fifteen-minute rest periods morning and afternoon; absolute seniority in layoffs and rehiring; severance pay; union shop. The companies offered four cents and rest periods; the union dropped to twenty-three cents. Management got up to seven cents and labor down to fifteen cents, and there, to everybody's surprise, they stuck, building political pressures.

Reed relayed the mediator's call to the Governor, who was in conference with Wesley Hofmann, going over the speech he would deliver to the National Education Association the next afternoon in New York. He had other problems: a downstate committeeman, a large contributor to the party's campaign funds, had just proposed a personal candidate for the vacant seat on the state supreme court, and issued a mild threat when told the chair was reserved for Ira Field; the pilot of the state executive plane had called to warn of a storm rising through West Virginia, and to suggest an earlier hour of departure; the new observation tower in DePew State Forest had collapsed under the season's first snow, proving that some inspector had been, at the least, careless. Hofmann was asking changes in the speech to avoid possible slights to the law school and the school of dentistry. So the Governor listened to Reed's report and said, "What have we got?"

"Two," Reed said. "One on each. The state commission hasn't ruled yet on unemployment insurance for the strikers, and the public service board has asked a legal opinion on whether the hospital contracts are now busted by nonservice."

"How honest is the strike?"

"A hundred per cent, so far as I can see it. There's a union man in the bosses' bridge game, but he's a tournament player and it's a money game. Besides, he's losing. These things don't usually look clean if they're dirty."

"How's our research on it?"

"I'll get a full report from the mediator, and I've got the earlier file here on my desk. When can we get to it?"

"We've got to clear out of the airport by seven, accord-

ing to the weather report, and it's two-thirty now. I'll pick you up in your office in about fifteen minutes."

"Make it thirty, and I'll have this stuff digested."

"Fine, Frank. See you then." The Governor hung up the telephone and turned to Hofmann. "Why don't we fix up the rest of this on the plane?" he said. "You could use a trip to New York—get rid of those rosy cheeks."

"Certainly, Billy. Certainly. Be delighted."

2

It was a case not likely to cause much trouble; the morning had been completely smooth. Only seventeen jurors had been necessary to pick twelve, the opening statements had been brief, the testimony of the three police officers involved had been unexceptionally scientific. Mancioni's counsel, a professor emeritus from the law school, presently head of the local Legal Aid, was sick of the case before it started, seeing the inevitable, reasonable result—Guilty, Imprisonment for Life. Cyrus Whitney, white-haired, beaked and portly and enormously experienced, was on the bench; he was not a judge likely to seek publicity or any action that might delay the dispatch of the business before his court. The gallery was large, but through the morning it had been quiet, and it seemed quiet now. Then the clerk called Forester, and there was noise.

"Eee-ee-yoo-ow! Rah! Rah! Rah!"

Whitney eyed the offending students at the rear of the court. The judge had seen Forester's statements to the press, something to the effect that his testimony was going to hang the little dago, even if the crooked cops tried to

let the bastard off. A friend of many years, a professor at the business school, had described Forester and warned that he would probably bring to court a collection of fraternity hot-shots. Dismissed from the University, he had moved his talents to a manorial farm in the near-by hills; this could be vindication, of a sort.

“ ‘Ray for Gus!’ ”

“Tell ’em where you got shot, Gus!”

“Up the revolution!”

Forester was sitting on the stand, his lips twitching in a dirty smile, his hands resting majestically on the arms of the witness chair. Whitney scowled and rapped his gavel. “The court,” he said in his deep and surprisingly loud voice, “will be quiet.”

There was an isolated shout of “Don’t let ’em scare you, Gus!” and Whitney added, in the same even, strong voice, “Among the punishments for contempt of court is automatic expulsion from any branch of the state university. Any young man who is unable to realize that this is not a classroom is hereby excused from further attendance at this trial. Are you ready, clerk?”

The clerk swore the witness, and Whitney made notes on the testimony. Forester said that he had been sitting quietly over a king in the hole, studying the expressions of the other gentlemen at the table, when a shuffling sound from the front room caused him to look at the entrance. There was a man in the entrance. He saw the man in the courtroom, at the defense table—the little guy with the stupid look on his face.

“Objection.”

“Please watch your comments, Mr. Forester.”

The man had a gun in his hand. The man was obviously a hardened killer.

“Ob—”

“Sustained.”

The other men at the table didn't know what to do, but he knew his duty, so he got up and charged the killer—

“Strike it.”

—and for his pains he got shot in the leg. He fell down. While he was on the floor he saw the man with the gun shoot several other people, including Randolph Lewis, a student at the college and a dear friend. All the victims were sitting with their hands high in the air and minding their own business. Then the man with the gun came into the room and flashed a knife, and the other killer—

“You will watch your language, Mr. Forester, if you know what's good for you.”

“Don't let 'em bully you, Gus!”

Whitney held up his hand to stop the sergeant-at-arms, who had headed for the trouble-maker, and Forester finished: the other man with the man with the gun, ha-ha-ha, grabbed the defendant by the arm and pulled him away, or else we'd probably all be dead.

“Strike that last, too,” said the judge. “The jury will of course disregard these clearly improper comments.”

Mancioni's lawver rose stiffly to cross-examine; there was a certain possible pleasure in this part of it. He exchanged meaningful nods with the judge as he walked lightly to his place before the stand. “Watch out, Gus!” cried a voice from the rear, and the judge, shaking his head, called, “Shut up.”

“Now, Mr. Forester,” the lawyer said in a flat, backless

voice, "when this incident began you were sitting at the second of the poker tables, correct?"

"You got it," said Forester.

"If I may borrow State's Exhibit A, could you point out the table on this photograph?"

"Sure. This one," Forester said, pointing.

The lawyer passed the photograph into the jury box. "You will notice," he said off-handedly to the jurors, "that the police mark Mr. Forester's wounded body as resting by the rear window."

"Whadju say?" Forester leaned forward.

"I showed the jury that the police did not mark your body on the photograph at the spot which you say was occupied after the shooting by your recumbent form."

"What's that mean in real English?"

"It means that either you're wrong now or the police were wrong when they prepared this exhibit."

"Woh-hoh!" called a voice. "They got you, Gus!"

"Objection!"

"Not at all," said Whitney. "Go on."

"Are you ready to answer, Mr. Forester?"

"Well," Forester said patronizingly, "you know, they was all pretty confused. They probably got it marked wrong."

"I see." The lawyer stepped back to the defense table and picked up a typewritten sheet, and held it out to Forester in his bony hand. "This is the first police report of the crime," he said to the court in general. "According to Mr. Forester's statement in this report, which I enter in evidence, Mr. Forester upon seeing the man in the doorway cried quote it's a raid unquote, or words to that

effect. He then bolted for the back window, and was shot as he tried to climb out. I realize—”

“They was pretty—”

“I’m not asking you a question yet, Mr. Forester. As I was saying, I realize that subsequent accounts give a higher moral tone to Mr. Forester’s actions, but those accounts, picturesque as they are, seem to be more the result of—shall we say—mature reflection. This first statement, of course, was immediate. Now, Mr. Forester, how do you account for the discrepancy here?”

“Like I was trying to tell you,” Forester said, then opened his mouth and closed it: he was somewhat nervous. “They was pretty confused, the cops.”

“When did you see the police first? That same night?”

“Sure.”

“Where?”

“I told you already, I was in the hospital. That bastard shot me.”

“Gus!” cried a voice in imitation anguish. “Gus! You were lying!” There was a quick laugh. The lawyer waited.

“I see. Let me submit to the court that nobody was confused, that the events were as first reported, that Mr. Forester stirred a panic, turned his back on the man in the doorway after a brief glimpse, did not see any shots fired, could not possibly now be in a position to identify the man in the doorway, and is merely attempting to cover his own record as procurer for a gambling house.” The laughter was growing in the rear, but the judge made no effort to stop it. The district attorney rose slowly, essentially untroubled but definitely annoyed: somebody could have warned him, too. The lawyer bowed slightly in his direction. “We used

to have a man in this court who defended people by getting up to the jury box at the end and saying, they're persecuting my client just because he doesn't have the money to hire a good lawyer. I won't persecute you because you don't have a good witness. Want to try him on re-examination?"

"Nope," said the district attorney. "Let him go."

There were hoots at the rear of the room and calls of "Gus, how could you?" and Forester, looking at the summer soldiers he had thought his friends, sat shocked to silence in the chair. He made no resistance as the clerk took his arm and led him away; but as they neared the back door he tried to turn. The clerk pushed him through the door. Whitney said, "The guards will now clear the court to avoid any repetition of these incidents."

At the defense table Mancioni was pleading. "What happened? What's doing? Does it mean I didn't shoot 'em, nothing's gonna happen?"

"No," the lawyer said. "Just a little entertainment for everybody. Doesn't mean a thing."

Mancioni said, "Oh. Sure, I know that."

3

The day was bright and very cold; Irving Moss stepped briskly out of the plush, overheated lobby of his hotel and swung up Park Avenue in a fast walk. He bent into the wind and felt the soft solidity of his flesh opposed to the hard brittle planes of sidewalk and building, the dead structures of fir trees marching up the avenue, one every two blocks, hung with Christmas bulbs. He guessed at the legitimate cab fare that would appear on his expense account, and whistled smoke to the wind and walked

jauntily, one hand on his soft gray hat, the other hand on the leather-bound student's loose-leaf notebook in which he was building his story.

His destination was Chafford's, perhaps the best and certainly the least-known of the elaborate preparatory schools in which girls of impeccable background—and sufficient sense to be trusted in the city—were trained to behave correctly at the colleges or junior colleges where they would eventually be deposited. The headmistress of Chafford's was Mrs. Harriet S(towe) C(abot) Clelland, Litt.D. (Bryn Mawr), who embodied to a talent the virtues expected of its graduates. She even drank well. Moss had not seen her for fourteen years, since his last dinner with the Clellands; he remembered her as a tall, thin, black-haired woman with a deep growl of a voice and fine, clear skin, slightly clouded, like ice mechanically produced in a city skating rink. She had been thirty-five then, and he expected that now she would be considerably older. He was wrong.

She came to the anteroom herself to lead him into her small box of an office. Another door led into the game room, and Moss could hear card-chatter in adolescent voices. She closed the door, then sat down behind her desk, which stood at an angle in the corner of the room. Moss zipped open his notebook and took out a well-sharpened pencil.

"I have your letter, Mr. Moss."

"Yes. I know it's embarrassing for you—"

"Not at all. Professor Clelland and I have separated, which is visible and generally known. I can understand that you would wish to see me if you are preparing an article about him. So I have no reason to be embarrassed."

She opened a cigarette case on her desk and held it out. "Cigarette?"

"No, thanks."

She inserted a cigarette in a long ivory holder and struck a wooden match against the base of a desk calendar. "What would you wish to know?"

"The Governor's coming to town today, you know," Moss said: there was no profit in asking questions.

"Yes, I expect to go to the meeting tomorrow."

Moss made a note. "Do you think you'll see him afterward?"

"No, of course not. But he's speaking on an interesting subject, and I have to deal with it myself, very occasionally. I'd like to know what he has to say." She puffed on the cigarette holder and allowed herself a narrow smile: her lips were thin and she wore no lipstick. She used everything else.

"I'll be there myself," Moss said. "Taking notes."

"Yes?"

The telephone rang and she lifted the receiver to her ear with an apologetic smile. "Who is it now?" she said. And then, "Yes, I'll speak to her."

She dropped her eyes briefly to a notepad on her desk, but as Moss tried to study her, to make his measure and his predictions, she looked up and at him, possibly through him, her dark eyes curious, the wrinkles tight around them. Fine, he thought; she ought to be wondering what I'm at.

"Yes, Marie, I'm fine. . . . Certainly, tell me all about it."

She swung around on her chair and knocked a cigarette ash into a heart-shaped ashtray. There were lines on her neck, but her shoulders were high and firm in the dark

gray, fitted jacket of her suit, and every black hair was lacquered in place. Gold loops held a carved gold pendant to each ear lobe, and the skin was fine over the straight, firm line of her jaw. She had never been a beautiful woman and certainly could never become one; but the gangling girls in her school, Moss thought, would give up the chance of heaven to look as she looked now. There was, he thought, a virtue in granite: you could wash the blood off it and it was almost as good as new.

"Certainly, Marie, surely. Why don't you come in tomorrow at, say, eleven o'clock. It'll do you good to talk. . . . Thank you, Marie. . . . Until tomorrow, then." She put a note on her calendar and turned back to Moss. "One of our old girls," she said. "They keep in touch with me because they think I know everything. You don't have the same thought, do you?"

"No," Moss said.

"Look here, would you like a drink? I always have a drop of sherry at this hour, but we have some scotch, too."

"I wouldn't mind if I do," Moss said. "Scotch."

"Fine. Just a moment, now." She stood up—a tall, straight figure of a woman, an athlete, not an ounce of fat on her, Moss would have guessed, though he would have been wrong—and she opened the top section of a highboy to show several rows of gleaming glassware. The two bottles came out of a lower section, and she poured herself a sherry and Moss a scotch, and put the bottles back. "Cheers!" she said, and sipped her sherry. Moss, on principle, slugged his scotch.

"Hmm," she said, "now what would you like to know—how we met?"

"Fine."

"It was on the golf course, or, really, at the country club. It was brand new in those days—that was the first year the club had been open. It was built by Billy's father and old Mr. Ransom—I suppose you work for Clarence Ransom, don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

"If you must, I suppose, you must. Well, you know, Billy had picked up the game in England, and he was very good at it, too, so his father built him the course, and old Mr. Ransom had to help. It caught on very quickly, and at the end of the season, October it was, they had a tournament. An old school chum of mine was getting married the next week, and I'd been invited out to be a bridesmaid—in Eyreston, it was, but that was the only country club for a hundred miles. Anyway, Sissy knew Billy, and introduced me to him before the tournament began, and I followed him around the course, because I was learning the game myself in those days. Billy got off ahead, but another man in his foursome was catching him, when suddenly he holed out from the sand trap on that short seventeenth, which meant that he won it easily. The minute the ball dropped in the cup, I knew he was the man I loved. That night there was a dance, and we danced all night long. Very romantic."

"How long after that were you married?"

"A little more than three years. . . . Would you like another drink, Mr. Moss?"

"No, thanks. What was Governor Clelland like as a young man?"

"Fearfully attractive. He wasn't handsome, you know, the way he is now, but there was something about his eyes,

and the way he held himself." She threw back her head and laughed. "You know how young girls are? No, you probably don't. But there's always a longing to get away from your own class, and find somebody different; and at the same time you're always frightened, it's such a great decision to make, and if you're rich you want to stay rich. I see it all the time with the girls here, and I can help them because I felt it so strongly myself. And there was something about Billy that put him out of any class at all; he was rich, but what he wanted was a kind of academic, middle-class life, so he could reach around and touch everything. I didn't know what it meant at the time, but I thought that was what I wanted, too, and then I was in love with him. You can't print that, of course. It isn't much of a story to you, I'd say—the golf course is better."

"And then there were class difficulties," Moss said gingerly, "and you found—"

"No, not at all, young man. It was many, many different things, just a marriage that didn't work. I'm certainly not going to talk about that."

"I understand," Moss murmured.

"I should hope you do. I'd like to ask *you* a question, while you're here. I've heard rumors about Billy and the presidency. Are they true?"

"Probably, yes."

"Mmm-hmm." She offered Moss a cigarette again, and when he shook his head she said, "That's right—I'm sorry" and lit her own. "Is he going to win?" she said finally.

"It wouldn't much surprise me," he said, and then he took the gamble. "I'm not on his side."

"Oh," she said, but saying it took a long time. "Then Clarence isn't supporting him?"

"Mr. Ransom does not feel," said Moss severely, "that Governor Clelland would make a good president."

"That's interesting," she said. "That's very interesting. Perhaps I'll vote for Billy after all. Does Governor Clelland know that you're against him, do you think?"

"I think so."

"*Very* interesting," she said. "Much more interesting than I had expected." An alarm clock sounded on the edge of her desk; she reached out and turned it off. "That's my next appointment, I'm afraid," she said.

"Oh, I'm sorry," Moss said. "I'd hoped—"

"You have some more questions to ask me?" she suggested.

"Yes, I really do. If we could have another fifteen minutes, there's so much background I'd like to fill in. . . ."

"Mmm," she said, and looked at the leather-covered clock. "I simply can't do it today, Mr. Moss. Now, did you say you were going to the banquet tomorrow?"

"Yes, I have my ticket right here."

"Excellent. I have two tickets for the school. Perhaps my assistant could sit in your place and we could have lunch together, and talk then."

"That would be perfect," Moss said.

"Splendid. It's table four, just to the left of the dais." She rose gracefully and extended her hand. "Until tomorrow, then?"

4

O'Connor was in the darkroom, couched under the ultraviolet light, making a montage of dirty pictures and whistling onto the hot fluid in the printer. He pulled out the print, transferred it to his left hand and shook the scalding

liquid from his right: a sacrifice to art. Gently he placed the print on the drier and turned his attention to a negative stewing in its own juice. The door opened behind him and he whipped a black cloth over the plate.

"Will the sumbitch who opened that door," he said without turning around, "get the hell out of here and never let me see his face."

"No," said a familiar voice. O'Connor sighed, draped the cloth carefully over the edges of the plate, and turned around to talk to Ransom.

"Sorry, of course, I disturbed you," Ransom said delicately. "I hope I didn't ruin tomorrow's front-page picture."

"Wasn't for us," O'Connor said. "Too fine grained. Maybe we can talk outside, though, eh?"

"Anything you say, Harry."

They stepped out into the litter of the photographic stockroom and O'Connor closed the door behind them. He leaned against the bookcase full of stock engravings and began rolling down his shirtsleeves. "Okay, boss," he said. "What's on your mind?"

"How'd you like a trip to New York for a day or so?" Ransom said. "Tighten up your contacts with *Time Ink*."

"Governor-and-pedagogues pictures?" O'Connor said.

"That's right. And possibly a picture of Mrs. Clelland, if she'll let you into that swank girls' school she runs. Part of the series we're planning for March."

"You're not going to get much in the line of lively pictures out of me," O'Connor said thoughtfully. "If I get him picking his nose you never see it."

Ransom grinned. "I know you like him, Harry. We're not planning to hatchet him in the pictures."

"Just in the story."

"That's right."

"What's the expense account for this trip?"

"Counting the transportation, I suppose it's—oh, two hundred. That gives you a lot of cash to run through in two days, keep the change. It's no more than your job, Harry."

"Okay," O'Connor said. "Okay. Just so you know I wear a little Clelland button in my coat. When is the folderol?"

"Sometime tomorrow afternoon. Check with the city desk, he's got the calendar."

O'Connor reached into the top drawer of a filing cabinet by the door, and took out five packages of film. "Take my own cameras," he muttered, "better get home if I'm going to pack, have to leave tonight probably—"

Ransom had stood silently in the center of the room; now he made a suggestion. "Why don't I say, Thanks, Harry, and you can say, Thanks, boss, so I'll know you don't hate to take my money every Friday. I think it would be nice."

O'Connor's thin face twisted and he shifted the film from one hand to the other. "Well," he said finally. "I'm a guild man, even though this isn't a guild shop, and you can't force me to talk to management. But, considering you're so much older than I am, and considering I've known you all these years, I guess that's reasonable enough. Matter of fact, I like to take your money every Friday."

"Thanks, Harry."

"Thanks, boss."

Ransom nodded, turned and quick-stepped back toward

the city room. O'Connor sat down behind the stockroom desk, singing:

When the swallows come back to Magnitogorsk—
È strano. È molto strano.

Then he picked up the telephone and called Frank Reed to arrange for free transportation that night on the Governor's plane.

5

Iris had finished packing for both of them; the suitcases sat shining in the center of the living room. She had been to the beauty parlor and the bookstore. Manitoba was out with young Billy, somewhere, doing something healthful. Iris leaned back in the low easy chair before the window and tried to concentrate on *Vogue*. Somehow the Christmas tree, green and white above the open page, disturbed her. She put down the magazine.

It was not her habit to be bored. She stared at her furniture, trying to think of something useful and possibly even interesting to do. Then she picked up the magazine again and planned, riffling through the ads: she would spend money while the Governor talked. The telephone rang, and she walked quickly into the foyer to answer it.

"Hello, Iris, this is Frankie Richards. Ann Folsom asked me to call and notify her friends that her mother died this morning—"

"Oh, I'm sorry—"

"And that the funeral is tomorrow at one. And she said you might want to get a substitute for your bridge game, Friday."

"I feel awful," Iris said, "I didn't even know her mother was ill."

"She wasn't—it was quite sudden."

"Do you think I could see her this afternoon? I won't be able to go tomorrow because we'll be in New York."

There was a brief pause, then: "Yes, why don't you come over? It'd do her good to see some people."

"Fine," Iris said. "Thank you for calling."

Iris hung up sorry for Ann Folsom and the fact of mortality, but not unhappy that she had something to do, something useful. She was not often so discontented as she had been this afternoon: she loved her husband and enjoyed being with him; she had given up no work for marriage and there was nothing to keep her from working now, if she wished; she had found a way to be natural with her son, and she saw as much of him as they both pleased. It was, by any logical standard, a successful life.

Her own mother, she thought, passing through the living room, had been dead now six, seven, nine years. She would not have approved of the Christmas tree, but she would not have said anything about it, either. She had liked Frank, though maybe not as a husband for her daughter; when they were married she took it like a *mensch*. She hadn't lived to see her grandson, but perhaps it all washed out—she hadn't lived to see what happened to Helen, either. She could never have understood that—hell, who could understand it, even after it was explained.

We all die sometime, Iris thought, looking at herself in the mirror, and the time comes when you're heading downhill to it. Someday she would have to give up and get dowdy, and examine what her son was going to marry; her

friends would age, some of them quite gracelessly, and she would herself acquire folds of prejudice to protect her frozen habits. Well, she thought, then will be the time to die, one dies but once, and until then she could at least enjoy herself. This afternoon she would have the pleasure of giving a necessary, costless solace; tomorrow in New York she would buy herself a black expensive nightgown.

6

The Governor went first to the management wing of the ballroom, Reed and the mediator at his heels. He entered unannounced and stood by the door, watching with amusement the card games breaking up as the committee, one by one, discovered his presence. Cheez it, the cops: there was no sign of pleasure from anybody. They might be anxious to end the strike, the Governor thought grimly, or they might not; but they didn't want interference. That was too bad.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen."

Greetings were muttered from the card tables and the Governor walked the length of the room to an empty chair on the bandstand. "Merry Christmas," he said, and sat down. At the door the mediator pointed a discreet finger. "I'm sorry to discommode you gentlemen," the Governor said, "but I'll have to ask Mr. Bringard to leave." He nodded in the direction of the table the mediator had fingered, and the union bridge player, who from the outside seemed just another short, stocky businessman in a double breasted suit, kicked back his chair and stood up.

"Pleased to meet you, Governor," he said. "I guess I'd better be getting back to my own crowd."

"I'd appreciate it if you'd wait in the hall, and I'll pick you up when I go in to talk to your people. I'd appreciate it greatly."

"All right." Bringard nodded his round, almost bald head and strode out of the ballroom. The mediator followed him into the hall.

"Now," the Governor said, and chairs scraped on the parquet floor as his audience shuffled into position to keep an eye on him. "I hope we have a unity of interest in this room—we all want to settle this strike. And now that I'm here we're going to settle it, I insist on it, and before my plane leaves for New York. I'm placing the prestige of my office on the block here, and several of you gentlemen"—he looked around the room and smiled at four men with cigars, the modern element, who had lobbied at the last session of the legislature, lobbied quite forcibly, with thousand-dollar bribes—"know how strongly I feel about the prestige of the office."

"Swell," said one of the cigars, a fairly young man who had come from an eastern business school five years before, built the most modern laundry in the Midwest and kept it busy by cutthroat undercutting of the trade, then organized the County Laundry Owners' Association to guarantee that such unfair practices could never flourish again. "None of us is making any money out of the strike."

"My assistants tell me," the Governor said, tilting back his chair and rocking on it, "your best offer so far has been seven cents. That brings wages to a dollar, five. You can do better than that."

"Maybe we can," said the cigar, "if we can renegotiate some contracts with the state."

"It might be possible," the Governor said, "that the state attorney general would rule you've broken your contracts by failure to produce. We might have to make new contracts, and I've heard there are a couple of large downstate laundries anxious to establish branches here. They might make a very good quote."

"Eleven cents," said the cigar. He looked around the room, picked up a dozen nods and a few despairing noes. "That's top," he said.

"Eleven and a half," said the Governor.

"With your personal guarantee that we don't lose money," the cigar suggested.

"No. You know, I've often felt it's a tragedy that our state legislators receive so little pay. Legislators get bribed all over the country, but it's terribly cheap here."

"Eleven and a half," said the cigar.

"Plus a vacation with pay, one week," said the Governor, "a week's severance pay for every seventy-five weeks of employment, rest periods and maintenance of union membership."

"No absolute seniority and no union shop," said the cigar, putting out the palms of his hands and making a balance scale out of them. "Why don't you step out for a minute, Billy, and we'll talk it over."

"Yes or no," said the Governor. "My office doesn't haggle."

"They've been out nearly two weeks," said the cigar, "and they're mighty poor people. A strike, they taught me, is a test of strength. I think we might win it."

"Not," said the Governor, slamming down his chair, "if your strikers got unemployment compensation."

The cigar looked around again and got a series of shrugs. For the first time he took his Havana out of his mouth, and he looked at it a moment. Then he put it back between his teeth. "I think I'm not going to give any money to your next campaign," he said.

"Do we have a deal?"

"You sell it to Bringard and his boys across the way, and we'll sign," the cigar said, "but I think we got a shade the worst of it."

"At least," said the Governor in a kindly way, "you weren't out of work two weeks." He walked the length of the room again, again without applause, and Reed opened the door. "Thank you, gentlemen," the Governor said. "Stick around. I may be back."

He picked up Bringard in the hall, and the four of them walked to the other door without saying anything. As he opened the door Bringard said, "Let me introduce you, Governor."

"Surely."

Bringard said "Hey!" and the groups around the union card tables turned to him. Except for three or four delegates in open shirts or lumberjackets, the aggressive element, they were twins to the men across the hall. Although more than one-third of the working force was feminine, there were no women on the committee.

"Governor Clelland has come here to try and settle this strike. I don't know what he's going to say, but I think we ought to hear him out."

The Governor took a seat at a vacant table near the door, and Bringard moved to the center of the room to watch. "I've already been in the other room," the Governor said.

"I'm going to tell you what I told them. I didn't come here to try and settle this strike, I came here to settle it. So let's all of us understand that we're going to reach an agreement. Right now."

One of the men in lumberjackets said, "Shoot, Billy. We'll listen."

"Ten cents," said the Governor shamelessly. "One week's vacation with pay, rest periods and maintenance of membership."

"Not on your life," Bringard said immediately. "You better go back to your friends and tell them they got to do more."

"They're not my friends," the Governor said, and looked around this room at thirty pairs of angry eyes. "You know," he said, "you get unemployment compensation or you don't. It's up to me."

"I know it," Bringard said. "But we'll starve before we'll take ten cents."

"Check," said the Governor. "All right. Let's move on. What's your actual minimum—the least you can go to your people with and say, Take it."

Now it was Bringard's turn to look around the room. "Thirteen," he said into the air. "One week is okay on the vacation. The rest periods are settled. We'll take a modified union shop. One week's severance for every year. Elimination of the second step in handling grievances, and a union bulletin board for every thirty employees. That'll do it."

"Now," said the Governor. "You have eleven and a half. No union shop, but maintenance. One week's severance for every seventy-five weeks. To hell with the grievance

machinery—you can settle that after you're back at work."

"Eleven and a half," Bringard said thoughtfully, and looked around the room. He drew a collection of nods and three blank stares. "We've got to talk it over."

"I didn't let them talk it over," the Governor said. "I've got a plane to catch. Yes."

Bringard nodded reflectively. "We might get twelve," he said to the air, "but it'll do—since you probably won't let us win our strike. I'll recommend it."

"Thank you, gentlemen," said the Governor. "Good luck." He rose briskly, nodded to the room in general, and led his baffled mediator and bemused assistant away.

When they got into the hall, Reed began to laugh. "Those were damn good figures, boy," the Governor said to the mediator. "I thank you for them."

7

The snow was heavy on the hills, on the ice in the river, on the roofs of the better houses, along the sides of the roads. On the roads themselves it drew white lines through cracks in the black pavement and swept icily back and forth in the shifting winds. Helen Adams stood by the glass doors that opened out onto her side lawn and watched the winds and listened as her son Paul played the end of the sonatina which was also the end of his first book of lessons. He stumbled and hit a chord wrong, but he recovered perfectly and in tempo, and Helen smiled at the snow. Even now, before he was five, he could get tone out of a piano: it meant he had been born with that juice in his fingers.

"That's enough for today," she said. "Come on—we'll make snowballs."

"Why'd you go to the window, mama?" he said, swinging the piano seat around and around, down the screw, until his feet touched the carpet.

"So I could hear what you were doing better than I could if I was watching, too."

"Was I good?"

"You were marvelous."

He swung the stool again and pointed up to the first bars of the sonatina. "I wasn't so good here," he said critically.

"You'll be perfect tomorrow."

"No," he said, swinging the stool back up, and Helen grinned, knowing there was more fun for him in that than in anything else. "Do it now," he said.

He started again, and got past the phrase he had missed. "Now," Helen said. "You did it."

He kept playing until he reached the cadence, and then he stopped. She stepped over and lifted him off the stool, it wasn't so easy any more, and set him down full length on the carpet and tickled him. At the beginning, when she had first moved into the house, she had told her sister she would know she was losing on the day the piano got out of tune and she decided it was too much trouble to call the tuner. Now she knew the day would never come; there was another pianist in the house, she would always keep it tuned for him. It was luck, the most wonderful luck, that she could teach him and he could learn; it was certain salvation for them both.

She picked him up, held him high, and set him down

on his feet. "Into the snowsuit with you," she said, and led him by the hand to the kitchen, where the suit—so big by the standards he had set only the year before—was hanging on the drier. In another fifteen months he would be going to school, but in the afternoons they would sit together at the piano, which would somehow make it proper for her to spend the morning at the piano, alone, making music.

It was not easy to be strange in a neighborhood where all, even the tolerance, was proper; and though she played for them at the musicales at the country club, the women felt there was something wrong with such purposeless devotion, and told her so. Perhaps she had made it too clear that to her the piano was something other than a career—a satisfaction too deep, or, if they insisted, as they sometimes did, not deep enough. Now there would be two of them to be strange, and she had discovered that it was possible for strange people to be happy, even to be friendly. They would be happy, she and Paul, and he would have his friends, and play baseball, but keep within him that seed of strangeness, that juice in the fingers, which made it possible for people to be happy against the rules. They would share it together, which was better than blood if you had blood, too.

And that was the worst that could happen, she thought as Paul zipped himself into his suit and blew on his hands to make the hot sweat that would form the snowballs. Better things could happen. Better things could happen.

Chapter Two

SERGEANT SMITH shut the door and clamped it tight, then walked up to sit beside the pilot, a captain in the forestry department. Smith himself was a registered pilot and proud of it; he had taken the courses on his own initiative and on his own time. Behind him in the converted DC-3 was an odd party—the Governor, Frank and Iris Reed, Wesley Hofmann and Harry O'Connor, relaxing in the deeply padded swivel chairs by the windows, and drinking cocktails Jack had mixed in the airport bar. Jack himself was examining with great suspicion the dinner prepared for the plane by the airline, and the hot cabinets which steamed at the dinner.

The Governor was bent over a clipboard, writing; every once in a while he flipped down the top page, which was a letter to him, and read it again. There was no conversation in the plane: the motors roared, and the wheels rolled toward the end of the runway. The plane spun around and the motors whined as the pilot tested them for the

long flight to New York. Finally the word came from the tower and the plane began to roll again, much more urgently now. The Governor put his clipboard face down on his lap and looked out the window; normal activity ceased throughout the cabin as its occupants, with varying degrees of conscious thought, lifted the plane in their minds from the concrete of the runway to a condensed weight of air.

The plane rose, climbed above the lights of the capital and turned in a dipping circle toward the east. The Governor picked up the clipboard and sighed. He looked around the cabin, which had been outfitted for his predecessor seven years before but was still one of the most luxurious of its kind. The nap of the rug was still thick, the nylon coverings of the swivel chairs unworn, the tables and magazine racks gleaming walnut, the walls around the windows a fine, dark plush. Reed, who had been reading a magazine in the Governor's first survey, now looked up and caught his eye; the Governor motioned him to the empty chair that guarded the Governor's privacy.

Reed walked unsteadily on the vibrating floor, and sat down, swiveling to face the Governor. "Work, work, work," he said.

"Did you see that letter from Frick in California?" the Governor said.

"Yes." Reed looked at the Governor curiously, and the Governor nodded.

"I'm going to answer it.

"You want it?" Reed said. "You're sure?"

"I want to talk to Iris once we're done here," the Governor said. "I think I want it."

"All right," Reed said, and there was a pledge in it. "What can I do?"

"Listen," the Governor said, and smiled. "Here's the letter I've drafted." He lifted the clipboard. "'Dear John, I am greatly flattered, and I must admit greatly pleased, that you and your friends in California wish to place my name in your presidential-preference primary. If it is the opinion of the Convention that I should be our party's best candidate for the highest office to which any man can aspire, I shall certainly accept the nomination. Paragraph. I must, however, reject your generous invitation to appear and speak for my own candidacy in California. I am the governor of another state, and should not wish to seek at my constituents' expense an honor for myself. Beyond that, however, I feel that I am not and cannot be a rational judge of my own capabilities, and that it would therefore be presumptuous of me to say that I am a better man for this job than the other worthy candidates in the field. I shall not even wish you luck, because a candidate must be chosen by the judgment of his fellows, not by luck. Paragraph. I am deeply grateful to you for your letter and your advocacy which, coming from a person of your abilities, seems to me the greatest compliment a man could ever hope to receive. Zinzerely.'"

"It's okay," Reed said slowly. "No mention of the voters."

"Good thought. I'll fix that."

"Do you"—the plane bucked into an air pocket, and out; Reed drew a deep breath—"do you want me to have it typed while we're in New York?"

"Not so fast, not so fast at all," said the Governor.

"You go tell Harry about it—he'll smell it in the air if you don't, and print it—and tell him also not to mention it. Tell him it isn't definite, because it isn't. I've got to talk to Iris first."

"About Helen?" Reed rubbed at the carpet with his long feet.

"About Helen."

"What can Iris tell you that you don't know now?"

"That," said the Governor, "is what I want to find out. You know, Iris takes these things pretty well. Better than I do—better than you do, too."

"All you're going to do is embarrass both of you," Reed said doggedly.

"That's as may be. I can't release the letter until I talk to Iris."

"Do you plan on talking to Helen?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Because she wouldn't"—the plane bucked again and the Governor swallowed with distaste—"want to be consulted. We always made our own decisions, Helen and I, on anything that was really important, because we respected each other too much to give ourselves emotional indigestion. What could she say? 'I want you to run for the presidency.' Nonsense, she wouldn't want it, she couldn't. But she wouldn't want me to turn it down for her, either. I don't want to torture Helen. She'll know that I thought about her before I said I'd run—Frank, I don't talk about her, but will you try to keep in mind that I'm nuts about the girl? That I went overboard like any middle-aged idiot, and then found it was more than that—found

that I'd never been happy in all my life, never known what it meant to share an existence. Will you remember what it was to me to force myself away from her, what agonies of rationalization I found necessary to the job—remember that she knew before I did, and she knew why. Frank, we've been good friends, but there are parts of me that you'll never know, because I don't know them myself—and she understands all about them. Iris is her sister. Will you let me talk to Iris?"

Reed started forward to stand up, then held himself awkwardly above the chair. "Billy," he said, and stood up.

"Sorry I ran at the mouth, Frank."

"My God, no. That's not it. I just want you to know that Iris was against your taking the nomination for the governorship."

"I thought so," the Governor said, and looked up at Reed stooping under the ceiling of the plane. "Did she know, Frank? Did she know Helen was pregnant?"

Reed stooped lower. "I'd swear she didn't," he said. "If it had been the other way around—Helen married and Iris in trouble—then you couldn't be sure, the strength runs so queer in that family. But the way it was—no. Iris wouldn't do it to you. She wouldn't do it to me. She may be tough, Billy, much tougher than I think. But she's not so godawful tough as all that."

"Thanks. Then I've got to talk to her."

Reed turned and looked at his wife, who was playing cribbage with O'Connor. "I'll rescue her before she loses any more money," he said gloomily, and stooped off down the plane.

The Governor looked away under the wing, and saw gray wisps of cloud beginning to form, and black fields,

and a town square circled with lights, and five roads lit by headlights and roadhouses, sailing out from the square toward the horizons. He thought of the possibility of nomination, of the great cities and the town squares, the trains rolling over the hot farmlands in September, the noxious men and the fine men, the clean smells and the dirty smells, the hotel rooms, the speeches and the cheers, the buttons and the signs, the hopes and the fears and the reasons.

“Whaddaya think?”

“I don’t know,” Sergeant Smith said, and the two of them peered through the plexiglass window at the clouds black against the blue-black sky, just ahead of them now.

“We can climb these,” the pilot said.

“Sure. But what’s beyond?”

“Idiots,” the pilot said.

“Are you sure you got the right airport with that call?”

“Yeah.”

“They didn’t know what you were talking about—they couldn’t see any weather trouble, it was still a couple of hours off?”

“Yeah.”

“Maybe this is a freak.”

“I doan like freaks. Accidents is freaks.”

“I don’t know,” Smith said. “You want to sei down, it’s all right with me.”

“Nah,” the pilot said, “nah. We got enough margin. I’ll push it.”

“You honor me, sir,” said Iris, sitting down in the other chair.

"What?" said the Governor. "Oh. Yes. I imagine you can make a pretty good guess at the matter before the meeting."

"I'd say you've been asked to run for president."

The Governor grinned, and thought how little Iris looked like her sister, how little they thought alike, and how much they had in common. He watched the high feather quiver atop Iris' flat hat, then lowered his eyes to hers. "Go on," he said, "go on."

"I know you don't expect me to approve the idea," Iris said.

"That's right. I don't wholly approve the idea myself."

Iris smiled sourly. "Well," she said, "of course, you've got more to gain than I have. I suppose I'd be about as close as you'd come to first lady, but you'd be president."

"Right again. Come on. More."

"Billy, I don't want to see it. I don't want to see you mixed up in any of it—I never did. I've always liked you, I always liked you for Helen. You're in a dirty business now, and we both know you've done Helen dirt."

The Governor sat patiently and said nothing.

"She doesn't blame you for it," Iris said. "I guess I do, a little. I think like a woman, I know, but I can't see what there is so important to you that you'd throw over Helen, and throw over your son—your only child. I don't see it, I don't understand it. So I can't possibly understand why you'd put that much more distance between yourself and your family, and wear yourself out in a hopeless, stupid job that nobody of any intelligence ought to want." She thought for a minute, and then said, "Phooey."

"That's a pretty complete statement," the Governor said heavily. "There's a lot of truth in it, too. But not all of

truth, Iris. I think I'm going to let them try me on the convention."

"You'll get it," Iris said dully. "You're the best they have—you're the best the country has, probably. But that isn't much of an excuse."

"I don't know that's true," said the Governor, and looked out the window again, at a countryside no longer his state but still his country. "I don't know that I'm the best, and if I am I think maybe it is an excuse. You don't know enough, Iris, to say that it makes no difference to you or to Helen or to Paul whether or not the best man for the job is president of the United States. I don't know either." The Governor warmed academically to the thought. "What do we know about history, about the importance of individual leaders? Damn little, damn little indeed. How much does anybody lead? How much does a leader simply take the spirit of his time, and express it? How much does the action of any government—except of course the most extreme—matter to the people who live under it? And yet there are wars and famines and plagues and persecutions, and I can't help feeling that somehow we can avoid catastrophes, keep a step or two ahead of the spirit of our times—if the best men hold the best jobs. And maybe, I'm trying not to be too proud about this, just maybe I am the best man. What do I owe to the people around me, then, and what do I owe to myself?"

Iris was silent for a moment, and the motors whined as the plane climbed to top the first windblown surge of rain clouds. "I still don't think it's an excuse," she said finally, and the Governor had an instant's fear that she would cry.

"Helen would," he said.

"Yes, it's because she has so much to lose. She'd rather lose you to a job, to a thousand miles away, than lose some part of you she loved. I know that."

"She might understand more than that."

"She might think she did." The plane shuddered and climbed steeply, suddenly, over a larger nest of clouds. The moon brightened the mist that seemed inches below them, and the plane straightened out toward a higher, still larger cloud bank many miles away. "I love to fly," Iris said. "I'm always a little scared."

"I'm not going to write Helen," the Governor said, "until after it's settled in my head. But I'll see that she knows before the papers get it."

"You have made up your mind, though, haven't you?"

"Not quite," the Governor said. "I shall open the pigeons and examine the entrails when we get to New York. But I've already written the letter telling them to go ahead. I just haven't mailed it."

"They tell me," Iris said reflectively, "the climate stinks. But I guess it'll be exciting enough, and maybe Billy can be a page in the Senate and learn to hold his liquor. Every cloud," she said, looking out the window, "has a radioactive lining."

There was a clatter from the front of the plane as Jack pulled from beside the galley a large, handsome walnut Pullman table with depressions specially cut to hold china specially made by Plummer's to the order of the previous governor.

"Will you dine with me?" the Governor said.

"No, you want to talk to Hofmann," Iris said. "Hof-

mann would be lonely. I'll dine with my husband, as a good girl should."

"Then O'Connor will be lonely."

"He can take care of himself."

Jack came wide-stepping down the plane, carrying the table over his head, and Iris swung her chair to give him room. He hooked the table into two steel eyes below the window, dropped the folded legs, placed the table carefully on the floor, and then slammed it with his fist to make it solid. Iris got up and walked around the table toward her husband's chair.

"Eating alone, Governor?" Jack said.

"I don't think so. On your way back ask Hofmann if he'll join me."

The Governor placed the clipboard on the floor, leaning against the wall of the plane, and looked at his hands. They were not, he decided, dirty enough to demand a visit to the tiny washroom—the one Douglas issue item in the furnishings; his predecessor had not liked to think of such matters. Hofmann eased into the chair across the table.

"I don't know how your digestion operates, Wesley," the Governor said. "If you'd rather not talk business over dinner, I can probably manage to hold off."

"I have the digestion of grace," Hofmann said. "It comes from tenure."

"Just let me get my hands on that CAA son of a bitch. He doan know what I'm talking about!"

"At least," said Smith sourly, "it's not a freak."

"Hell, no. I've seen dozens of these. From the ground."

"Do you want to turn back?"

"She's coming too fast—by the time we got there they'd have the place closed tight, we'd have to sit it out upstairs. I'd rather fly."

"Shall I warn them inside?"

"Nah. They got ten minutes before it gets rough. I'll warn 'em then."

"The problem, then," said the Governor as Jack came by again, with napkins, knives and spoons, bread-and-butter plate and soft rolls, soup bowls and lobster bisque, "is the emphasis. I'm going to be honest with them about the importance of the technical schools, but I've taken the liberal arts college as my subject, so it's fair enough if I spend most of my time on that. Now, most of these guys are from public-school systems. Without violating too flagrantly the intent of the legislature, I'd like to see our arts college a more national institution than it is. So what about recruiting?"

Hofmann spooned abstractedly in the bisque. "You can't do it," he said. "It won't work."

"Are you sure?" the Governor said. "I know a few other schools, and ours is a good one. Maybe it isn't a great faculty, but it's solid. And the library is one of the best in the farm states. Fine departments in history, American lit, music and physics, and good departments scattered through the social sciences. A boy could get a worse education. I'd like to put it that way—we're not in competition with Harvard, we don't have any National Scholarships to offer, but any boy with a little money and a large desire for education ought to keep us in mind. I want to say it just that way."

The Governor looked brightly at Hofmann, then began his soup. He was about to speak again when the pilot's voice came through the loud-speaker into the cabin: "Anybody eating liquids had better hurry and get them into some sealed container, like his stomach. We're gonna start bouncing soon." The Governor devoured the rest of the bisque, and was buttering a roll when the bottom dropped briefly out of the universe and the plates rattled on the table. Hofmann clutched his stomach, and then set his face.

"Do you have any objection to my doing recruiting?" the Governor continued, ignoring the lurch.

"I don't know how well you've kept up with recruiting procedures," Hofmann said carefully. Jack soundlessly removed the soup bowls, and from the rear came O'Connor's voice raised for the punch of a story, and Iris' loud laugh. "It's a large problem these days."

"Tell me about it."

"I can give you an example. Downstate in Meridian this year there was a boy we really wanted to get—his principal told us about him three years ago. But that same principal wanted to show off his school, so he sent the boy to the college entrance board exams, and three weeks later there were scouts in Meridian from Harvard, Yale and Chicago. I don't know what's best for the boy—the boy's parents have to decide that. But I'm almost certain we're not going to get him."

"Can't we fight that somehow?"

"You don't know. It's new since your time at the college. We don't have that sort of resources."

Plates containing filet mignon and shoestring potatoes and carrots, plates containing salads and sealed paper cups

containing coffee appeared quickly on the table, and rattled as the plane bumped upward and settled like a sigh. "Maybe we could get the alumni to establish some scholarships for out-of-state boys, to make up for it."

"Ninety-three per cent of our alumni come from the state, and eighty-two per cent are still in the state."

"I see," the Governor said. "They'd cut our throats if we tried to get money for foreigners." He sliced the steak, quickly, with eight sharp strokes. "Is there anything I can do?"

"Well," Hofmann said, rather shyly, "I wouldn't be affronted if you called it a good school."

"That's a good thought," said the Governor. "A fine thought."

At the other end of the plane O'Connor was telling an increasingly queasy Iris about her brother, about assignments covered and missed, and stories invented. "It was," he said, "a new kind of journalism. Revolutionary! We were too late for the great time of inventing stories, editors were getting suspicious and all that. If you brought in a story about some hoodlum whose dog was waiting faithfully for him on the steps of the jail, the editor told you to go eat it—but if you brought in a picture of the dog, too, well, pictures don't lie. We made a wood flute and hacked it up a little with knives and dug some worm holes——"

"I remember that story," Reed said.

"I should hope so—it almost got us a prize from the National Science Institute. We were third in the voting—honorable mention. First true Indian flute ever discovered (we admitted it might have been French, because it was

near where Champlain camped one night, but all the experts who looked at it said it was Indian). Irving did a great story, lead paragraph about Pan and antiquity and such. First pictures I ever got into *Life*. Those," he said with slow sentiment, "were great times."

The plane lurched and bounced and wobbled, then climbed strainingly through a gray ooze. "Wonderful steak," Iris said. "It tastes like gravel."

"Then there was the girl who murdered her husband, and wanted good publicity for it, and gave us the god damndest nude photography I've ever made, and offered to give Irving even more, but he was afraid she still had the knife concealed somewhere. It was a real shame when he grew up, but that's one of the perils of the business. I don't know what he's doing for Everybody's Friend right now, but he's unnaturally solemn about it." The plane swung and buffed and wiggled, and O'Connor unconcernedly finished his steak. Then he said into the air, "Do you know?"

"No," Reed said. "We haven't seen much of him."

"Oh, hell," Iris said, "we all know what it is. He's trying to find something to use against Billy."

"How's he doing?" O'Connor said.

"We haven't seen much of him," Reed repeated. "I don't know."

"All right," O'Connor said. "All right. I know when I'm not wanted."

"Sorry, Harry," Reed said, and grimaced as the plane went into a steep climb. "But, look. You are wanted. You smell something, right?"

"Boffo."

"If I tell you what you smell, can I give you something to

keep it quiet until the story breaks? You're a photographer, not a reporter."

"So I want pictures, not a story. Give me the picture and I'll keep it on ice till you unfreeze."

"That's very sweet of you, Harry," said Iris.

"Not at all," said O'Connor.

"Fine," said Reed. "I'll get you your picture. The story is that Billy's been offered the support of some California delegates to the convention, and that he's probably going to announce a willingness to run for the presidency. It isn't definite yet."

"That's a better story than most," O'Connor said, and glanced down the plane to the Governor. "You know, I wish him luck."

"You wish him joy of the worm?" Iris suggested.

"What sort of picture do you want?"

"I can skip it. Pay me another way: what's the Governor's schedule for tomorrow?"

"No help to you." Jack cleared their dishes, and as he stepped away with the full tray the plane dropped steeply to one side; gracefully he bounced a hip off the wall, steadied the tray and walked on the balls of his feet toward the galley.

"You never have the camera ready at the right time," O'Connor said sadly. "On the schedule. I want to catch Krenek's new opera at Juilliard at four. Can I get my picture first?"

"Sure," said Reed. "It's a luncheon meeting, they'll start serving at one, and Billy ought to be into his speech before three."

"And you might get a very naughty picture of me if you

haunt the ladies' dressing rooms at Bonwit's," Iris said. "Who's Krenek?"

"He writes operas. I played fiddle in the orchestra for one of them once." He looked at Iris speculatively. "Could I get a really naughty picture?"

"Look," Reed said. The plane wiggled and wobbled and plunged and recovered, and Jack started toward them from the galley.

"For the love of God," Iris called, "don't bring me any more food!"

The plane bucked. "I'll pass it, too," O'Connor said.

Reed nodded, and Jack returned to his kingdom with the tray. The plane kicked and dipped and squirmed, and Iris said, "I'm going to heave my cookies if you boys don't shut up. What's Billy doing with Hofmann?"

"Doesn't look as though he's doing anything right now," Reed said; the two men toward the front were silent, peering through the windows at the muck that was so erratically holding up the plane.

"Do you play bridge, Mr. O'Connor?" Iris said.

"Madam," O'Connor said, "as a young man I won the Lakes tournament and was twice runner-up in the Central States tournament. I invented the O'Connor system of play, involving continual side-suit finesses below the nine-spot through the Iron Duke."

"Seriously," Iris said. "Do you play bridge?"

O'Connor nodded. "For money."

The plane fell and jumped and swung and shivered. "Frank, honey, go get Hofmann," Iris said, "or I'll puke all over you."

Reed got up and lurched along the aisle. "Do you still need President Hofmann, Mr. Governor?"

"Not for anything more than company."

"We need his company worse—you're self-reliant. Wesley, would you be interested in a little medium-stake bridge until we find out if we're getting to New York?"

"With that cardsharp O'Connor?" the Governor said.

"Well," said Reed. "We'll rotate partners."

"It sounds to me like a fine idea," Hofmann said. "Billy wants to get rid of me anyway."

"The Governor's work," said the Governor mildly, not denying it, "must be done."

Hofmann hauled himself along the bouncing seats to Iris and O'Connor; Reed staggered up to the galley and brought Jack back with the cards and the scorepad and the skill to set the table as a diamond against which the swivel chairs could turn. Reed and O'Connor cut partners, and Reed dealt.

"There's four of them playing cards," Smith reported. "The Governor's reading."

"I never saw nothing like it," the pilot muttered, "and I hope I never do again." The plane lurched quickly left, and the left wing sank; the pilot fought the controls and slowly brought it back to level.

"What's the weather say?"

"I doan trust 'em."

"What did they say?"

"They said we oughta pull out of it before we get to New York. I told 'em to get the funeral parlor booked anyway, just in case."

"Not much longer now."

"Depends how you look at it."

The plane lurched to the left again, and then Smith saw the red light go on over the rpm gauge for the left motor, and the needle dropping, slowly, deliberately, calmly.

"Do you see—"

"Yeah."

The plane fell off in a glide to the left, and the pilot turned the nose down to pick up speed. An updraft caught them and they shot first to the right, then to the left, and the wing dipped again, harder. "I'll feather it."

"Yes," Smith said.

The left engine off, the propeller spinning free, they dropped again, down to fifteen hundred feet. Through the rain they could see the lights in the farmhouses. "I'd hate to burn up one of them nice homes," the pilot said.

"Why don't you try that engine again?"

"Anything you say, bub." The pilot turned the switch, and, miraculously, the rpm gauge began to rise again, the sound came equally from both sides, and the plane dipped to the right, then rose evenly, higher into the air. "Next stop," said the pilot, superstitiously offering no thanks, "New York. Why don't you go back and find out what the gang was doing these last couple of minutes?"

Smith opened the door to the cabin and saw the Governor still reading, the foursome still playing cards. There was a set about their faces, all of them, that meant they had known, they had heard the sound stop from the left engine, they had felt the glide, and seen the farmhouse lights; the game had slowed, the reading had moved word by word, forced into the mind. There was nothing else to

do, no funny sayings worth trying, no questions worth asking, no fears worth expressing. Might as well sit still and hope it goes away.

"White around the gills, I bet," the pilot said.

"Not much."

"No?"

"The Governor's still reading, and the others are playing cards."

"Them people is crazy," the pilot said viciously. "Politicians!"

"What were they supposed to do?" Smith said sensibly.

"Just what any godfearing man would do," the pilot said. "Scream for their souls."

"Did you?"

"Hell, no. But I'm trained for it."

"Maybe they got training, too."

"Maybe."

The winds were milder now, and ahead they could see occasional breaks in the clouds, and red rainfall on the city lights. "Clearing," Smith said.

"Yeah. We're home free now. We could coast into Newark from here if both engines went."

There was a moment of silence as the pilot checked his instruments and prepared to call the airport for landing instructions. Then, suddenly, he exploded. "You know what's wrong with them crazy people back there? You know? They got no religion, that's what. No faith."

Chapter Three

JACK woke the Governor at eight-thirty, and at the Governor's insistence ate breakfast with him by the corner window that from a height of thirty-five stories overlooked the southern end of the park, and Central Park South and the homes and offices and hotels of midtown New York. It was, as always before, a sight to see; the day was very clear and obviously very cold: there were crackles of frost against the window joints.

Two white-coated bellboys wheeled breakfast in on its mobile table, and on call promptly wheeled it out. The Governor told Jack to go somewhere and keep himself busy until six, and on Jack's departure he sat down at the little desk in the living room of the suite, and wrote his letter. It was surprisingly easy to write.

My Helen,

A group of Californians have written me and asked permission to place my name in their presidential preference primary this spring. I have written to give them permission, and will send that

letter when I am sure that you have received this, so that you will not learn the news from the newspapers or from Irving. It is the least I can do, and I know it's damn little.

I will not be an active candidate for the nomination, and perhaps I will not get it—though I think I will. I don't very well understand the personal reasoning that has led me to approve this fantastic idea. I think you probably know better than I do what it was, and whether the process was good or evil.

It is not the kind of job you want, but you can't turn it down. If you know anything about history—or just read the newspapers—you can't without a positively indecent humility consider yourself unworthy of it. You have a certain responsibility to the people who live in the same world with you, and if you have met the other people who will be candidates you must feel a certain generalized obligation to mankind. So much is the surface, and I will not go below it.

I know it is a defect in character to place this general obligation above my real and particular obligation to you. I believe I can plead with full honesty that I suffer by this decision, and that I do not look forward to any but distasteful rewards from it. A private citizen is more of a man than the president. I would surely be happier with you than with the State—

He broke off, and looked out of the window again, cloyed with his own words, sick of the professional personality that had become so natural to him. He looked back at the letter, read the first few lines, and then folded the page and tore it into exact quarters. He took out a new piece of paper and wrote:

Honey:

I've been asked to run for president and I'm going to tell them to go ahead. I wish I could tell them no, but I can't. I'm sorry.

BILLY

Suddenly, his hand hurt. He looked down at the dots of children skating some four hundred feet below him on the artificial ice of the city rink. He looked out the other way, toward the furry women parading up and down Fifth Avenue, in and out of doors. Then he read the letter, scowled at it, sealed it, stamped it, mailed it in the chute down the hall, got into his muffler and his heavy coat and his soft hat, and went for a windy walk through the city.

2

Irving Moss woke up and said, "Let's have a drink with sister Iris, here on neutral ground. Why not have a drink with sister Iris? One reason, two reasons. Let's have a drink with Iris, anyway."

3

Any day away from home was a holiday; Iris was still asleep when the telephone rang. She let it ring, confident in the knowledge that Manitoba would pick up the extension; but it kept ringing, and finally she remembered that this was a day away from home: not all skittles and gravy, she thought. She opened a wary eye and examined the stolid but cheerful bedroom; finally she made the great effort and turned her head to look at the telephone. It was still ringing. Her husband had turned his back on it.

She picked up the receiver. "Yas?" she said wearily.

Then: "Oh. All right. Why don't you come up to our suite—thirty-eight-fourteen—around four."

Then: "No. I guess they'll still be at the meeting."

Then: "No, you come up here. I'll be too tired from shopping."

Finally: "See you then."

"Who was it?" Reed said indistinctly to the pillow.

"Irving."

"Eager little beaver, isn't he?"

"Umm."

They tried to get back to sleep: no luck. Iris heard Reed rolling about discontentedly and decided to repair her face.

"I'm getting up," she said.

"All right. You first."

When she came back he was asleep again, and she woke him, sitting on the side of his bed. "Come on, lazy," she said. "So you've got a morning off—that doesn't mean you've got to sleep like you were hung over."

"No," he said, and rolled over on his stomach. She gave him a loving but sharp smack on the rear, and he rolled over again and looked up reproachfully.

"We've got things to do," she said.

"What?" He pulled her down to him and kissed her on the cheek, on the nose, on the mouth, and then she squirmed away.

"Now?" he said. "What's so urgent?"

"Shopping. For hats. And dresses. And furs—"

"Furs? Why furs?"

"Why not?"

"Did you get me up," he said menacingly, "just for this?"

"No, no, no," she said seriously. "We've got to buy toys, too, for your son. And I'd like to get something for Paul. We're only a couple of blocks from F. A. O. Schwarz."

"Nothing," he said pointedly, "for me. Nothing."

"Well, you know, honey, anything I get for the boy is a toy for you."

"Oh, all right," he said, and grinned. "I'll call Billy."

"That's right. He loves you, even if I don't."

Reed picked up the telephone and asked for the Governor's room, and after a moment the girl said there was no answer. He asked her to keep trying; the receiver whirled and stopped and whirled, and finally Iris said, "Well?"

"No answer."

"You might as well get up, then."

"I wonder if there's anything wrong?"

"Phooey," she said. "He's a grown man. Maybe he's at Schwarz, buying a toy. Maybe he's at Steinway's, buying a piano. Maybe he's at the *Times*, winning votes from Sulzberger. Leave him alone for a morning."

"I dunno," Reed said doggedly.

"It's all an excuse to stay in bed, and you know it."

"Yes, dear," Reed said, and swung his feet off the bed.

"Maybe Hofmann would know?"

"I wanna get breakfast!" she said, and stamped a foot on the carpet.

"Hungry?"

"Yes."

"Okay," he said, and stood up. "The final argument. Appetites."

4

Harry O'Connor came smiling but slightly sick out of the high-speed elevator, and walked through the double doors with a cheerful wave to the receptionist, who called

after him in a weak and querulous voice. He strode down the gray corridors, peeking at the cubicles within the cubicles within the great square cubicle of the great stone face. The corridor turned and he turned with it, and then sharp right through the door and he was standing before the secretary to his particular pet assistant photo editor.

"Who—" she said, but he was around her desk before she could get out another word, and she followed him in timidity and anger to the editor's door.

"Harr-ry O'Connor, by all that smells like the River Liffey," said her boss, and she retired grumbling to her desk.

"Hello, Stanley," said O'Connor. He removed his rather natty brown tweed overcoat and hung it gently on the clotheshree by the door.

"What brings you here?"

"Plane."

"What else?"

" 'Spense account."

"And?"

"Two," said O'Connor, settling down in the chair before the desk, "unique picture-story ideas."

"Begorra!"

"Bedamned," said O'Connor calmly. "One of them is a knockout anywhere, and I offer it to you only in memory of a girl named Sally."

"Frivolous," said Stanley, "Sal."

"Yes. This one will lift you as you've never been goosed before, make your little picture book a famous magazine."

Stanley looked fondly at the two rows of bound volumes that warped the low bookcase behind his desk, then leaned forward with bright-eyed eagerness.

“Get it, now—How Ernst Krenek Teaches Juilliard Students to Do an Opera. Six pages of pictures, more if you insist, text by Winthrop Sargeant—not too much text, please—and you have a cultural feature to beat the burning of the library at Alexandria, with Bette Davis dashing across the ice to save it, and music by Massenet.”

Stanley put one hand to his nose, and with the other hand reached high to pull the chain on an imaginary water closet.

“You have a reactionary mind,” O’Connor said. “Think, while there is time, of what happened to *Liberty*.”

Stanley frowned and simulated thought. Then he shook his head. “Why don’t you try *Liberty*?” he said.

“Fine,” O’Connor said with dignity. “I shall.”

“You mentioned another joker in this deck,” Stanley said abstractedly.

“So I did,” said O’Connor. “But you don’t seem to care about my ideas. Sometimes I think you boys resent me because I have my own expense account and you can’t chisel my space rates with meals.”

“Would you rather talk about something else?” Stanley said politely, touching a long hand to the longer than usual sandy mustache on his long face.

O’Connor looked hurt. “I’ll give you another chance,” he said slowly. “This one is really unworthy of my art, but it is”—he sighed—“an exclusive, and, after all—”

Stanley allowed himself a grin. “Please,” he said. “The presses are waiting, and Mr. Cuneo has other uses for them.”

“A series on Governor William Clelland, who is going to be some’at in the news very soon now.”

“Why?”

"I can't tell you exactly why, but I don't imagine it's any great secret that he's considering changing his present apartment for a colorless mansion in Our Nation's Capital."

"And what makes your pictures exclusive?"

"Their close connection to the actual taking of the decision. I can't give you details, and I've already turned down the story once. If it doesn't interest you I'm not going to take the pictures; if it does I'm sure I can get new options."

"Why did you turn it down the first time?" Stanley said curiously.

"Because I like Clelland, and I didn't think the story would do him any particular good. I've been moved by arguments from self-interest, and the sight of a particularly fine fiddle in a window between this office and the subway."

"Well, take the pictures by all means. There's certainly a chance we'll use them."

"Time rates if not space rates?"

"All right. But don't chisel. Tell me about Clelland."

O'Connor looked past Stanley's shoulder, over to the river in which somebody could drop a bomb that would sink this building and the violin shop and educators' meetings and Juilliard and many other activities. Beside the window was a printed sign:

IF YOU CAN KEEP YOUR HEAD WHEN ALL OTHERS

ARE LOSING THEIRS

maybe you don't understand the situation.

"He's bright and able," O'Connor said finally, "and he's tough. From all I've seen, he's decent, too. He thinks, and he knows things to think about. It wouldn't surprise me

much if he was a little fond of ordering people about, but you need some of that. He has background. Hell, he stands so far above all the other guys looking for that job that once he gets up you won't be able to see them."

"Would you like to describe these qualities to the rest of the boys at the daily meeting of our underground organization?" Stanley said.

"No, I've got to get out of here," O'Connor said, and stood up. Stanley rose behind the desk and they shook hands on what was, after all, a deal. O'Connor draped his coat over his arm.

"How about lunch?" Stanley said.

"I'm covering Clelland's speech today, and I've got a free ride back tonight—just no time. Next trip."

"We keep a candle in the window for you at the Three G's," Stanley said.

"Yes?" O'Connor turned dreamily to the door. "Well, this afternoon," he said, "just for me, stuff it."

He bowed out of the office, waved to the secretary, and started back through the gray corridors toward the elevator. It was not really an ideal way to do business, he thought; but it was better than some.

5

The Governor went first to Schwarz, and bought his toys, one to be sent to Billy, one to be sent to Paul, and he walked down Fifth Avenue, peering into the windows at the multiplicity of ways that men made money. He passed a woolens store, then turned back and bought a sweater to be sent to Helen. Buying goods out of the state, he thought, depriving the state of revenue, and the same goods doubtless available

at home. But he never went shopping at home; it never occurred to him.

He went on, gawking at construction projects and the great buildings, a series of watercolors, Famous Scenes from the History of Banking, a Pan American Airways window all about Brazil, a Thomas Cook window all about Switzerland, bookstores, piano stores, department stores, office buildings one after the other. The wind blew at his back, and his ears were suddenly painfully cold; he pulled his soft hat lower on his head and walked on, the sight-seer in New York, for the first time in nearly six years, the hick from the farm state looking at the greatest city in the world.

The city was part of the country, and the country was part of the world, and here as everywhere within the globe of atmosphere the people, who swirled past him, toward him, across his path in ones, twos, threes, dozens, would be prosperous or poor, possibly even living or dead, according to decisions made by the president of the United States. He looked into the faces that came past him; he knew none of them, and none of them knew him. But some of them, perhaps all of them, would know him well quite soon. Quite soon.

And then, of course, he could never be a sight-seer again, never anyone but the captain of the boat they were all in, the idiot at the helm, the great savior who saw the shoals, the tax collector, the hero, the waster of public funds, the One who works for us All. He could never again walk down Fifth Avenue, looking curiously at the people and the stores, marveling at the multiplicity of ways that men made money, the variety of wives that spent it.

He went down the little hill and walked past the biggest building in the world, past the business machines and the rugs, toward the strange building, the start of a time, on an island to itself in the traffic. He remembered Madison Square when people lived there, the grass was green, and the fantastic Garden stood in the corner, the statue awkwardly triumphant on top. Was that his time, or this? How much time had passed in physical change, how little in chronology. Was any man equipped to make decisions in a time when tubes went on and off so fast no man could count them? Was any man better equipped than William Clelland, who had been here thirty years before and wondered then somewhat more than he could wonder now?

Suddenly he turned west and found himself in a dirty street where there was nothing but typewriters—shops that made typewriters, shops that repaired them, shops that rebuilt them, shops that made tools to repair typewriters, shops that made tools to make tools to repair typewriters. There was ink and dirt in the air and papers blew along the gutter, and on both sides of the street in brown cascade rose the high office buildings in which men made and repaired and rebuilt typewriters. And these men like all the others, though they lived in this special, sealed-off world of odd skills, in this special, sealed-off street, would live or die, prosper or starve, according to decisions made in a white building in an artificial city, decisions that he would make. The typewriters would be typing the bills of new businesses, or standing in junk heaps for the slight value of the scrap, as the president wished—or rather as the president could pick, and predict, and trust, and rule. Their wives would wear this or that, their children would find

jobs or delays upon getting out of school, would go to certain schools——

To certain schools. My God, Harriet. If I want to be president, the Governor thought, I have to get her permission.

He turned back to the avenue and hailed a cab and rode back to the hotel; and on the ride decided that he could not face it. Reed would have to see her.

6

Mancioni was clearly sane and Mancioni was clearly guilty; so the best the defense could fight for was a recommendation of clemency. On the surface it was a nasty case, clear murder in the hope of money. The wife was dead and the children were obviously better off in the care of some agency. The only reason for clemency would be Mancioni's own imbecile appearance as witness; and this would be most effective if he arrived on the stand completely unprepared. His lawyer, therefore, shuddering, had him led by bailiffs dumbly to the stand, and shocked by the eyes that were on him: it was a necessary cruelty.

They placed Mancioni's hand on the Bible and read him the oath; he made no reply. "Do you swear?" the clerk said, not unkindly.

"Yes," the lawyer said from the courtroom, and Mancioni said, "Yes."

"Now, Mr. Mancioni," said the lawyer, "do you clearly understand what is happening here?"

There was no answer; Judge Whitney scowled and looked questioningly at the lawyer, who shook his head. "Do you know that these twelve people"—he waved—"here in the

box, that these twelve people are going to decide whether or not you killed three men, and whether you should die for it? Do you know that these people can decide whether you shall live or die?"

"Objection."

"Sustained," Whitney said. "Strike that. The jurors will do their duty as they see it. They do not have any other than a purely legal relation to the defendant."

The lawyer nodded. "Thank you, your honor. I'll try something else." He returned to Mancioni, and noted with satisfaction that the eyes were even blanker than before. "Now, Mr. Mancioni, how long had you known Kraus before this night when the three men were killed?"

Mancioni shifted on his seat. "A little time, maybe, a little."

"How little? One month? Two months?"

"Yeah."

"One or two months?"

"Yeah."

"You didn't know him well, did you?"

Mancioni looked hopefully at the lawyer and when he received no help he slowly shook his head. "Kraus, he was a good guy, good to me. He hit me, but that was okay, he was a good guy, he didn't mean nothing."

"This all started," the lawyer suggested, "when he told you he knew how he could make some money for both of you. Is that right?"

"Objection."

"Forget it, counsel," Whitney said to the district attorney. "The witness has to be led. Go ahead."

"The idea came from Kraus, didn't it?"

"Yeah. He told me he knew a place, a gambling place, with a lot of money, he could get us a lot of money."

"This place was in another state, wasn't it?"

"Yeah."

"So you drove down there with Kraus, and what happened when you got there?"

Mancioni looked miserably at the lawyer, then down at his ragged shirt. "You know, I told you."

"Tell me again," the lawyer said gently.

"The place, the gambling place with a lot of money, it wasn't there."

"It was closed?"

"Yeah."

"But Kraus told you he knew another place?"

"I told him, I said I gotta have the money, for Mary, I told her I was bringing the money, for the new kid, we had to have the money."

"Please," the lawyer said. "Pay attention to my question. Kraus told you he knew another place, didn't he?"

A fog rolled in and around and through Mancioni's mind; he knew no answer to the question.

"Let me put it a different way. You had never seen this cigar store before, had you?"

"Maybe, I dunno. Once I used to live near there, somewhere, a couple'v blocks somewhere."

"But you didn't know there was a gambling game there."

"No."

"So Kraus told you there was a gambling game."

"Yeah."

"Now, what did you think when you were standing in that

doorway and you heard the gun fired behind you? You were scared, weren't you?"

The judge saw the district attorney rising, and waved him down.

"I dunno," Mancioni said, and looked all the way down at his feet.

"How——"

"I was standing there," Mancioni said, "everything was happening, all the people, and Mary and the new kid, the people was running."

The lawyer waited until he was sure Mancioni had stopped. Then he said, "You went to school for only four years, didn't you?"

"Yeah."

"And when you stopped going to school, what grade were you in?"

Mancioni squirmed in his chair and blushed; the fog was now a color of humiliation. He said nothing.

"You were in the second grade, weren't you?"

"Yeah."

"Can you read or write?"

"No," Mancioni said in a low voice.

"Can you add or subtract?"

"A little, I can add," Mancioni said.

"Have you ever been arrested before?"

"No. I never been in trouble, never in real trouble."

"And the only reason you went with Kraus on this trip was that you felt you needed money desperately, because your family was starving——"

"Objection."

Judge Whitney winced. "Let him say it."

"Because your family was starving, and your wife, who died that night, was in the hospital giving birth to still another child. You felt so strongly you must have money that you forgot everything else; you didn't really know what you were doing. Is that true?"

"Yeah," said Mancioni, and suddenly hope blossomed in his watery eyes. "It's true, that's it."

"Your witness."

The district attorney stepped forward and asked his first question in a good copy of the old lawyer's tone.

"You know that when you shoot off a gun you can kill somebody, don't you?"

"Yeah."

"You knew it that night, too."

"Yeah, you can kill somebody with a gun."

"And when you shot that gun you knew you might be killing somebody, didn't you?"

"I hadda get out," Mancioni blurted. "It was, all the people was after me."

"Why did you have to get out? Because you knew you were doing something wrong?"

"Yeah. I knew it." The hope was slowly leaving his eyes; he gripped his hands on the arm of the witness chair, and tried to hold the hope in his body. But it drained away, evenly, horribly.

"And one thing more," the district attorney said. "When your attorney asked you whether Kraus had picked this place, you said that you told Kraus you had to have money. Now, remember that you're sworn on the Bible to tell the truth. The holy Bible. Was Kraus ready to quit when he found that first place closed? Did you egg him on?"

"He hit me," Mancioni said drearily. "That's why he hit me. He wanna go home, I gotta have the money, for Mary."

"Get it over with," Whitney said. "It isn't pleasant."

"You insisted on the crime," the district attorney said. "Is that true?"

"I dunno."

"Objection!"

The district attorney shrugged his wide shoulders and turned his back on Mancioni. Then, suddenly, Mancioni said, "Yeah. I gotta have the money—I gotta have it tonight for Mary, Mary needs it, and the kids. . . ."

7

The clans had gathered; six to a table at two hundred and fifty tables they sat and drank or waited for their coffee, nibbled at stale petits fours from the centerpieces, chattered, smoked and looked curiously up to the dais. They found each other fairly good company, teachers all, with a smatter of deans and principals; and they felt that somehow in these seminars and full meetings, these personal chats and huge listens, they were improving their services to Education. They were not fools; they knew the commercial purpose of these meetings; among themselves they spoke of The Slave Market, not The Conference. They were looking for jobs or employees, but they were also looking for friends, and Keeping Up With Developments, which was worth the time and perhaps even the money. They were glad to be in New York. And they were all moderately interested in Clelland, the manumitted who remembered the companions of his bondage.

Meanwhile the ex-slave himself was eating poorly: he had

spotted at a forward table a face familiar to him from marriage, and beside her Irving Moss. Moss was listening.

"Turn your head," the Governor said to Reed, "very slowly to the right. You will see a table with a placard marked four. What do you see to the left of the placard?"

"Oof."

"No. Harriet. I was thinking about Harriet just this morning—can we do something about Harriet?" Reed hesitated, and the Governor continued. "While I was thinking about Harriet, I also thought that I can't face it. Also, I can't do it well. I'd just reopen wounds she's probably forgot about." The chairman was on his feet, making routine announcements, and the Governor cut his voice to a whisper. "Could you tackle her for me—today, right after this is over?"

"If it has to be done."

"It does. It isn't just myself—it's everybody who might get involved in the fight."

"She wouldn't make any fight. Undignified."

"Get her to promise," the Governor said. "She doesn't look very dignified right now, chewing the fat with Irving. One drink too many, I'd say, from memory. And I'd better talk to Irving myself, see exactly what's on his little mind."

"Don't," Reed whispered harshly.

"It's all right. Slander by itself never bothered me."

"Just don't," Reed said pleadingly. "It'll be awfully unpleasant."

"Yes. But it might be useful. He may ask some questions after the speech, embarrassing-type questions, and maybe I can tell him the answers would take too long, and I'll

give them to him privately when the meeting's over. I can be very friendly at such moments."

"I don't think he'll stay for questions," Reed said. "He's meeting Iris in our room for drinks at four."

"Perfect," the Governor said. "Uh-oh." The chairman had turned his way, and was flourishing a fat hand. "Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure you all know our guest for today, a distinguished academician who has become also one of our most distinguished statesmen. His works in English political history are still standard sources; his work in gubernatorial administration has brought his name prominently into discussion for the office of president of the United States." There was a gasp, from the audience and from the Governor; and then there was a moment of cheerful applause. "His subject," the chairman continued smoothly, "is The Role of the Liberal Arts College in a State University. I had planned to introduce him myself, but we have here at the table a man far better suited than myself to the task—President Wesley Hofmann of the Governor's own State University. President Hofmann."

Hofmann stood up and acknowledged the introduction; the chairman passed him the microphone. "Mister Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished teachers and scholars. I am not going to take much of your time. I don't have a speech prepared. As a matter of fact, it was only this morning that your chairman and I decided that I should make this introduction. I wished to make it because I knew that Governor Clelland would not tell you in his speech of the great contributions he has made to Education in our state, the close and personal interest he has taken in the development of our University. Therefore, I should like

to mention not only his assistance in the usual political troubles"—there was a chuckle at this—"but also his advice, freely given and never urged, his intelligent interest in our problems, the hours of precious time he has devoted wholly to the cause of Education in our state. I have been his superior and I have been his servant; and there has been no change in our relations. My gratitude is very personal and very warmly felt, and this is perhaps not the place to express it; but there are few places and occasions on which such expression would be more appropriate." He paused. "It is with a high pleasure that I introduce to you the Governor of my state and therefore the true presiding officer of my University: William Clelland."

Hofmann sat down quickly, and the Governor got up and cleared his throat into the microphone. The teachers were applauding loudly, and he waited. "Thank you," he said, and stopped, and waited again. Then: "Thank you, Wesley. Of course, you all understand that President Hofmann has cut the stuffing out of my speech—I intended to tell you all about what I've done for our University, little as it is, at length. And elsewhere in that overgenerous introduction he missed a cardinal point—when he was my superior, I had tenure."

This time there was an appreciative laugh, and during it the Governor bent away from the microphone to give Hofmann a personal thanks. Then he drew himself up for the speech.

"Mister Chairman, President Hofmann, ladies and gentlemen of Education, the greatest of modern professions. Some years ago, when I was a very young man, I made a visit to a restaurant in this city with another

student almost as young, but much more knowledgeable in the ways of the world. He suggested wine with our dinner, and it would not be too strong to say that I was flattered. I was even more greatly flattered when the waiter recommended to us, with a secretive air, the wine—not so expensive as one might expect—that was drunk by true gourmets. My friend, however, was not so impressed, and he and the waiter had an argument, quite embarrassing to me, which culminated in a crushing, proud and angry comment from the waiter: ‘M’sieu,’ he said in his careful accent, ‘I assure you. I dreenk it myself.’

“My friend looked blandly up at him and said, ‘Of course. But, you understand, our tastes may differ.’”

It was, the Governor thought with satisfaction, charming: they liked it. He timed the pause exactly, and then went on. “I am here today to talk to you about the liberal-arts college of a university which was founded with a primarily practical purpose. I am going to talk about it glowingly. It is my school. I received my own college education there, and I taught there for twenty-three years, and often I miss those years, and I wish I were back. I am on leave, and I intend to return some day. It is, I say, my school; there are acres of it that I love as I love no other place on earth. But I think I should ask you to keep in mind, through everything I say, that this is *my* wine, and of course our tastes may differ. . . .”

8

The summations were finished, and Judge Whitney was reading casually to the jury from his notes, detailing the evidence presented, describing precisely the few questions

of fact involved. When he had finished this narrative he paused and reflectively rubbed his wrinkled pug nose. Then he said, "Now. If you decide that the defendant Luigi Mancioni, with knowledge of his actions, fired the shots that killed John Laney, Randolph Lewis or Francisco Valenta, or participated in the robbery which led to the deaths of these three men and the death of Alan Smith, you must return a verdict of Guilty of Murder in the First Degree. In this state any murder committed in the course of a felony is automatically murder in the first degree, and all participants in the felony are equally culpable.

"If you decide that the defendant Mancioni did not participate in this robbery, you must return a verdict of Not Guilty.

"If you decide that the defendant Mancioni did so participate, but without knowledge of his actions, you may return the verdict of Guilty of Manslaughter.

"You may not return a verdict of Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity, because no competent testimony to that effect has been presented. Stupidity is a great evil and a greater pity, but it is not insanity. The defendant knows the difference between right and wrong."

Whitney hawked and swallowed, picked up the record and his notes, and bent over to put them away in his briefcase. When he emerged again, he turned on the jury his most benevolent glance. "I charge you deliberate carefully the evidence and the instructions you have heard; it is important that your decision not be hasty. The defendant is entitled to consideration of every argument that has been brought up in his defense, for murder is a terrible crime, and the penalties for it are terrible in just and equal

measure. And there is a Power that judges us all for the way we judge our neighbors. I trust you will keep that Power in mind, and do your duty to Him as to the State.

"The sergeant-at-arms will lead you to the jury room, which will be locked. If you wish any further instructions, or wish to examine again any of the evidence in this case, the court and all its services are at your disposal. Are there any questions?"

No questions.

"Would counsel like me to add anything to this charge, or make any changes?"

No requests.

"Thank you." Judge Whitney bopped the gavel lightly on his desk, dragged his robes down the steps from the bench and out the door to the back of the courtroom. Before the jury were locked away, Whitney was stretched comfortably on his couch, thinking of dinner and ready to nap: he should have time for a nap, he thought; he should have given them sufficient fear of the Power for that. But he was wrong; less than ten minutes after the jury had left the box the clerk came to the judge's chambers and announced that they had reached a verdict.

The judge slipped grumbling into his robes and found the jury ready for him when he mounted the bench. He called the court to order, looked at the defendant for a moment, and then asked the foreman what he wished. The foreman wished to announce a verdict, which turned out to be guilty of murder in the first degree. Then the foreman added a recommendation for clemency.

Whitney blinked and swallowed and muttered: it was his opinion that juries were convened to rule on the facts, so

that no suspicion of individual bias or lunacy could taint the judgment of the courts; sentencing was strictly a question for judges. Such recommendations were sops for the soft-hearted, whose hands, if left unshackled, would quickly twist the law out of all meaning. The clerk began to poll the jury, and the judge studied their unimpressive faces as they answered. It was not fitting for a judge to think about sentences until the jury had achieved its finding of fact; and Whitney, in full discipline, had not until now thought about the penalty appropriate to Mancioni's crime. At this instant he decided.

The last jurymen called out his answer; the clerk announced the verdict. Whitney excused the jury with thanks for their deliberations, and told them that despite the short duration of the trial he would release them from any further obligations in this and the three succeeding terms. As the jury left the courtroom he asked the attorneys if they had any objection to the immediate pronouncement of sentence, or any requests. The term calendar was crowded, and he would appreciate the opportunity to get the case completely out of his court at this time. Mancioni's lawyer said that he had no objection, and would just as soon that sentence were pronounced immediately after the jury's recommendation. Judge Whitney thanked him.

The judge summoned the prisoner to the bar; it was at moments like these that he most regretted the absence of the English black cap. Then he ordered the quickest possible removal of the prisoner to Farmsville State Prison, and his execution by electric current during the week of March 21st, succeeding.

"You'd have turned me into a solitary drinker," Iris said, opening the door, "if you'd come just three minutes later."

"I wanted to catch his nibs' speech," Moss said. "How are you, Mrs. Reed?"

"I'm completely pooped, and you're almost twenty minutes late, and I've been much too tired to read or do anything but stare blankly at those god damn packages." She waved her arm dramatically to indicate the five boxes lying on the carpet, the couch and the desk. "Well, come in. I've already ordered mine, but we can pay two tips. What would you like?"

"Straight Jack, to down the wind."

"Well, order it yourself." Iris plopped down into the deep chair before the window and watched her brother sit rakishly on the arm of the couch, one leg swinging free, and pick up the telephone.

"Bar," he said.

"Could you send up a double shot of Jack Daniels' Black Label, and a glass with some ice, to room thirty-eight-fourteen?" he said.

"Thanks," he said. He turned to Iris. "He caught the boy on his way with yours, so it'll be one tip. So I wasn't disastrously late."

"All right," Iris said grudgingly. "I'll let you call me sister this once more. How was Billy's speech?"

"The usual crap. My God, but he looked handsome, though. I was sitting next to Harriet Clelland, and she was goose flesh all over. And she ought to know better."

"What in hell were you doing with Harriet Clelland?"

"You never used to ask me what I did with little girls."

"Well, I used to be a little girl myself. Are you getting filth from Harriet Clelland to use against Billy?"

"Like Frank Costello, I cannot tell a lie. I refuse to answer."

"Ah, Irving, I hate to hear it." Iris sat up a little higher on her seat. There was a knock at the door and she called, "Come in."

The bellboy came in and set the tray on the desk. "Give me the check," Iris said.

"Now, wait—"

"Nonsense, Irving. Besides, I don't know whether I want to drink your liquor right now."

She tipped the boy, more than she should have, probably, because there was emotion in his "Thank you, Madam."

"Think nothing of it," Iris said. The boy left, and Moss got up from his stage position and began stalking rather dramatically around the room. Iris watched him with small but genuine admiration.

"Did you have any particular reason for that little insult?" Moss said finally, talking out the window.

"Well, yes." Iris picked up her martini and sipped at it genially. "It wasn't an accident. Somehow those remarks almost never do just slip out."

"What exactly did you mean by it?"

"Oh, Irving, I'm so damn tired, and I don't know whether I'll like what I bought. I've got enough problems without this one again."

"I didn't start it. You did."

"Fine. Now I stop it."

"Not so easy." Moss turned away from the window and prowled again. "I don't like to work for Ransom. I never did. Give me the reason, and I'll drop it. It's not political with me—if the nation wants him the nation can have him. Come on." He stopped and turned on her. "Give me a reason."

"Because your little sister loves him, and your little sister is worth you and me and him, all of us wrapped together and tied securely and shipped by Saks Fifth Avenue. Because she's a diamond and the rest of us aren't even plutonium. We haven't been much as sisters, so I can say it—but you were a real brother with her once. All you're out for now is to hurt her, because she committed some crime against you when she went to bed with Billy. It's none of your godalmighty business, and you ought to get back to Europe where you came from and leave us Indians alone." Iris pulled herself still higher in the chair, took the martini again and drank it down. Then she chewed on the olive, and stared at him as he stared at her. When she had finished the olive she stuck out her tongue. "That's what I think," she said.

He grinned at her like a wolf. "Sure," he said. "You married one. You're the first lady of the state, through all this, and nobody minds it—not to your face, anyway—because you're Frank Reed's wife." He took three steps to the tray, picked up the double-shot glass and held it high in a toast. "To Frank Reed," he said. "A gentleman, anyway." Then he downed the whiskey, fast. Unfortunately, he coughed.

"A finer gentleman never lived," said the Governor from the door. "I see you've started."

"Yes," said Iris gloomily, shaking her head at him. "Indeed we have."

"Hello, Iris," the Governor said, and then with his biggest smile, "Irving! Why, I haven't seen you in years. How've you been?"

"Okay."

The Governor put out his hand. "I hear you're working for Ransom again."

"That's right," Moss said, ignoring the hand.

"Oh, cut it out, Irving," said Iris from her chair.

In answer, Moss swung his torso and his right arm, and knocked the Governor's hand away with a loud slap.

"Stop it," Iris said in the firm voice that so often worked on her son.

"No," the Governor said. "Keep it up. Let's get it out, Irving. It seems big enough to occupy some space. What is it?"

"You know exactly."

"Helen?"

Moss stood his ground and said nothing.

"Do you really think that's any of your business?"

"I don't think it's my business, professor. I know it."

"How? Did Helen ask you to make it your business?"

"She didn't have to."

"Then who was it? Did I ask you? Did Iris? Did Frank? No? What did you go to college for, if you can't behave like a gentleman to your sister's friends? Have you learned anything worth knowing?"

"Lay off it," Moss said. "I've got a reason that's good enough for any man in this world."

"I understand that, Irving," the Governor said, com-

pletely in control of himself again. "I'm not proud of what happened. And I know you have every reason to dislike me for it. But I think perhaps it's festered till it's got completely beyond reason. After all, Helen is Iris' sister, too, and Iris is honest, and Iris and I are still friends—"

"Oh, for God's sake, Billy," Iris said.

"No," the Governor said, his eyes still on Irving. "Let's see if we can't get this down to civilized proportions. Irving, don't you think there's a reason why Iris and I have been able to stay friends despite the evil that happened to Helen?"

"I certainly do," Moss said.

"Do you think Iris would still be shaking hands with me if I were the kind of leper you seem to think I am?"

"Yes."

The Governor stood still for a moment, and then said, "I'm sorry. I don't like a scene any better than you do, and I'll leave." He turned to Iris. "Frank warned me, and I should have taken his advice. I really am sorry to ruin your afternoon this way." And then to Moss: "Good-by, Irving. Better luck next time."

But before he reached the door Moss' voice reached out and stopped him. "I'll tell you why, Billy, so Iris will know. She doesn't seem to, now."

"I don't want to hear it," Iris said.

"No," the Governor said, turning back toward the room. "Let's get it out where we can look at it."

Moss grinned. "There's only one reason," he said, "why you didn't marry Helen. Only one reason. Sure, ambition was part of it. You had a chance to be governor. Maybe you didn't like the messiness of a divorce, I don't blame you

much for that. Maybe there were other little arguments I don't even know about. But you'd have overridden them, Billy, you'd have let them go—except that my sister wasn't one of your kind."

"What?"

"Ira Field, too. Remember Ira, Billy? He was the mayor, and he used to be a friend of yours, but when he got into trouble you threw him out like deadweight. He wasn't one of your kind, either. Ira and Helen—they aren't the sort of people your mother knew, the sort you were brought up with. Let's call it snobbery, Billy. Snobbery's a nice word for it. Probably Iris has picked up some snobbery herself, maybe by osmosis—Billy, what I say is, you'd have married Helen, you'd have married her in a minute when you found she was in trouble—governorship, divorce, all that mess—except that Helen was different. Helen was a Jew."

Iris came out of her chair like a weapon, her fists flailing for her brother's mouth; but he stepped aside and her arms carried her off balance into the couch, and she fell against it, her head on her arms on the cushion, crying and kicking her feet in fury. It was not easy to move at that moment, but the Governor took the step forward and bent down to her and gave her his hand. But he couldn't keep himself from saying it:

"What's the matter, Iris? Do you think it's true?"

BOOK THREE

Chapter One

MANCIONI DIES TONIGHT!

REED was reading the editorial page; the front headline stared at Iris as she walked into the room. She read it absently and sat down at the table. "Does he?" she said.

"Does who, what?"

"Mancioni."

"Oh," Reed said. "No, I don't think so."

"Don't you know? Morning, Manitoba."

"Morning, madam."

"Billy get off to school without us?"

"Yes'm—but he said next year he wants to go to that photographers' ball himself."

"He can wait awhile for that," Reed said from behind the paper.

"Yessir. I guess he can. You want 'em poached this morning, madam?"

"What's Mr. Reed having? I can't see."

"Poached," said Reed. "Damn."

"Something wrong with the eggs, Mr. Reed?" Manitoba said solicitously.

"No, no. Just something in the paper."

"I see," said Manitoba cheerfully. "I think I'll go make madam's eggs now."

"Why don't you?" said Iris brightly. Manitoba strode off toward the kitchen and Iris looked again at the newspaper. "What's bothering you in the paper?" she said.

"Hmm?"

"That god damned newspaper you're reading when your wife comes in for breakfast," said Iris with a touch of annoyance. "What's in it that makes you curse?"

"Oh," Reed said. "An editorial."

"Saying?"

"They're going into the laundry amendment. That business of forcing the public hospitals to use private laundries. You know. Wondering aloud whether there was any undue influence on the legislators. Then asking what kind of influence Billy used to settle the strike."

"That's not nice."

"No."

"Can they do anything to Billy?"

"What? Oh, it's hard to say. The association did a good piece of bipartisan bribing to get the amendment. Billy knew about it, so I guess it could be damaging. There wasn't anything he could do. But then he used it, just for a minute, as a kind of threat when he was forcing a settlement of the strike. So in a way he's implicated—if that's the kind of newspaper you run, and that's the kind of newspaper Ransom runs. That's," said Reed, setting the paper aside as he warmed up, "not important by itself, because he can't go

far on that line—he can't fight both parties. But it's a sniff from the pot. Ransom is making strong medicine, and brother Irving is probably pinching in the ingredients. So there's going to be a fight, with stinks from the pot, and this is a bad time for a fight, so I said Damn."

"How many delegates does Billy have right now?"

"Two hundred and seventy-two."

"And how many does he need?"

"God knows."

"I bet Billy knows, too."

The eggs arrived, and Iris started eating. Her husband picked up the paper again, then put it down and looked at her with some annoyance. "Why the devil do you want to keep picking on Billy?"

"He ruined my sister," Iris said indistinctly.

"What?"

"Nothing, nothing."

"It's so god damned silly. I've put six years into Billy's administration. It's my future, too, you know."

Iris worked on the egg until she saw her husband reach again for the newspaper. Then she said, "I'm not arguing with your loyalty." Quite suddenly, she realized she was going to say something really serious; she put her fork on her plate and looked across the table a little pathetically. "I don't like to see you standing around like a mirror, reflecting glory," she said. "You're too much of a man for that. Maybe Billy knows what you're worth, but nobody else does. I know he's a great guy and all that, but you say yourself you've put six years into it. And what have you got now?"

Reed had held back the grin as long as Iris was talking;

now he let it loose. "Honey, that's the nicest thing I've heard in months. Let's get it straight. I reflect the glory because I'm not the man he is, and I'll never be. I wouldn't want to be. It's too hard."

"You and my damn sister."

"Not at all. I'm part of a team, as they say, and he's captain. Fine. He tosses the coin with the opposition, and he guesses how it comes down. I wouldn't want to guess. If you think a corporation lawyer has any more glory than I have, you're wrong. And if you think a man shines any the more brightly by staying away from bigger shiners, you're wrong again. It just looks that way. I'll grant you, though, that one of us is overloyal."

"No, I'm serious, dammit," Iris said.

"No, you're not."

"I hope I ought to know whether I'm serious or not."

"Nope. Look, why don't you come over to the office and we'll have lunch together. I can't get home for dinner, you remember."

"No, I—no, that's right—the reporter's panic, or whatever they call it. All right. I'll pick you up at the state house."

Reed got up from the table and started looking around for his briefcase. "In the bedroom," Iris said. "You were reading while I dressed last night."

"That's right," Reed said, and started toward the hall. He turned in the doorway. "What would I ever do without you?" he said. "And, to show you your importance, what would the Governor do without me?"

"Why," said Iris, picking up the discarded newspaper, "he'd just drop dead in his tracks."

The paper was draped over the red plush seat of one of the gilt chairs in the hotel ballroom; one of the reporters picked it up and tossed it down and said, "Maybe it'd be worth trying just once more. If he'd postpone it a day—"

"He can't, he can't," said another reporter wearily. "You know he can't."

"I guess. I hate to miss it after all these years, and just to see that stupid bum fry."

"You'll forget it. There'll be plenty of booze where you're going."

The reporter waved at the paper. "Not likely to be much where he's going."

It was a dress rehearsal, with make-up, and the man now on the ballroom stage had been expertly painted and clothed; at a distance he was Ira Field to the mole. Across the stage was another man, dressed as a childbride and simpering; he represented, in far less charming form, Mimi Delanno, the Autumn Campus Queen, whom Field had married two weeks after the Governor appointed him to the State Supreme Court. Scattered on chairs around the ballroom floor were members of the State Capitol Reporters Association, some in the fancy wear they would need for their own acts, some in the worried expressions of committee members, some wrapped in the disgusted gloom of children Fate had doomed to miss a party. Below the stage the four-piece hotel orchestra was producing a drone in three-quarter time; the imitation Field was singing a Viennese tune:

Es ist keine pleasure
I doan get no leisure—
Ganzen jahr die hotzen pantzen—

Admittedly, it was crude—but the State Capitol Reporters Association Drama and Bourbon Society Annual Spoof was always crude; besides, it was stag, and Field would be there, and his wife wouldn't be there, and Field was a sport. And some relief was needed from the long series of skits about Professor, Governor and President Clelland.

They had already cut one of the best sketches of the show—about important convicts and their luxurious life at the state penitentiary—because the warden was going to be busy, and the committee refused to knife a man with the truth when he wasn't looking. One of the committee had proposed a substitute sketch about Judge Whitney, but the problem was that Whitney would be there, and it wasn't safe; not with Whitney.

The Field-impersonator left the stage with his blushing accomplice, and a Japanese chorus filed on, followed by a dancing Japanese "Clelland":

A politician I
But one of wit and learning,
Of marvelous discerning,
The ni-hicest so-hort of guy!

The women will go nuts
When they see me on TV
The issues I'll make easy
For every stupid klutz,
For every stu-hu-huhuhupid klutz!

Do you think times have gone to hell?

I do agree.

O-ho-ho-ho-ho hi-hi-hi-hi-history!

Do you want joys millennial?

Then vote for me,

Ee-hee-hee-hee-hee-eagerly!

I'll charm your willing ears

With all your hopes and fears

And you will rise in cheers

For little me——

"Jesus Christ, speed it up," said a voice from the floor. "This damn thing runs nearly two hours without dragging."

"So what do you want?" The hotel violinist stood up and brandished his violin emotionally. "We play it as it is written. Like in the medley. What do I know what silly words you write?"

"Okay, Ignatz, okay," said the voice. "Skip it. You play it like it's written."

"Every year," said the violinist, sitting down reluctantly. "Every year the same verdammte nonsense."

"You mind your manners," said the voice amiably, "or you'll find yourself back in the Catskills, playing basketball."

3

The front page of the paper was tacked securely against the door in the study, and O'Connor was playing fiddle at it, furiously. The windows were closed; only the chairs and the books in the built-in bookcases presented surfaces to absorb the sound; and every note of the Sarabande hung in the air, overtones and discords, batting themselves back

and forth in the room and filling O'Connor's ears with the power he never received from the button and the shutter and the piece of film.

His thoughts kept the beat in his head: He'll-fry-I-guess-but-be-fore-he-does-they-ought-to-give-him-a-me-dal-for-shoot-ing-that-bas-tard-Fer-gu-so-so-so-son! It was the new violin, the one the Governor had bought, so to speak, and it had a tone as rich as a Guarnerius, if you didn't have a Guarnerius. O'Connor held the fiddle down to rest his neck, glanced at the headline again and debated playing the Danse Macabre—that would knock some of the complacency out of Gloria quick enough. He looked again at the headline and moved on to the next movement of the partita—the truth was, without the fiddle he was in serious danger of getting bored.

So-the-war-den-and-the-gang-will-get-them-selves-stink-ing-drunk-so-they-can-watch-the-poor-dumb-slob-get-fried-in-the-bat-ter-and-holy-God-what-a-pic-ture-story-that-par-ty-would-make-I-can-see-it-now-seven-pages-of-ex-pos-ee-par-ty-in-the-war-den's-of-fice-while-priest-pre-pares-dying-man-be-low-oh-boy-stop. Sort-of-a-shame-I-have-A-house-in-these-parts-they'd-burn-it-and-no-jury-would-e-ver-con-vict-in-fact-no-sto-ry-would-e-ver-ap-pear-in-the-pa-pers-oh-well-who-would-be-a-pub-lic-ser-vant-pub-lic-ser-vant?

Not little Harry, O'Connor said to himself, holding the fiddle down again, but what a dirty story it really is, Ransom planning politics around an execution, and all the little guild members yiping because some of the bloom got took off their party, and the warden's pet cons loading booze into his apartment for the night. They'll get some of that booze, too, they will. And then there'll be the priest, hoping

I'll take his pretty picture and put it in the paper for him—doing his duty, noble soul, locked in with a dangerous killer just to give the killer a chance to repent, lily-white, Rinso-white, white all through. Remember, Harry, when you thought of becoming a priest yourself, and you majored in Latin at college so you could talk the jargon and convince your mother you were as good a man as any of the black-coated swine that came around to the door and took the milk money right out of the cat's saucer if there wasn't any other money around. Then you came out of college into the depression and there weren't any jobs, and the church looked like a fine soft berth. But you're a good man, O'Connor, you couldn't swallow it, so you bought a good camera cheap from a fence who was pals with one of the priests; you'd always known picture taking was easy. Still, it was funny how easy it turned out for me. Well, those were the days—youth and beauty and a kind of perfect skepticism, lost, all lost.

He rested the fiddle against the scarf again and moved on to the Gigue. *What would glori a have done if I'd become a priest why she'd have found some others wain for glori a is not a girl to do with out her bed now sing me a song about that sweet songster sing me a song about that that that sing me a song about that . . .*

4

Ransom stuck his head into Moss' room and said, "Nice job on the think piece, Irving. Better get tomorrow's done early, so we won't have to run out of the party."

"Sure," Moss said. "I'm going to do two versions for tomorrow—one for either way he goes."

"That's what I like," Ransom said. "Enthusiasm."

The Governor had just finished Moss' editorial when the buzzer went off on the intercom, and his secretary announced that Mr. Reed was outside. Then the secretary opened the big door and Reed came in with twelve cardboard folders under his right arm. "Little work, eh?" he said.

The Governor nodded gloomily. "What's there?"

"Eleven bills. I've recommended your signing five and vetoing one; the PSC has accepted a couple; the Bar Association—all the reports are attached. The twelfth is a commutation of sentence for Mancioni."

"I see by the papers that he dies tonight," the Governor said.

"Umm. Did you read the editorial?"

"Yes."

"Bastards."

"He's your brother-in-law," the Governor said absently, "not mine. No, I guess he is mine. Skip it."

"I didn't put any brief with the paper," Reed said, getting back to his subject, "because I thought that if any argument was necessary I'd rather make it orally."

"Shoot," said the Governor. "Let's hear what's on your mind."

"Seriously?"

"Seriously."

"All right. He's a poor, ignorant slob, a genuine victim-of-society case. He'd never been in trouble with the law before. His partner was an ex-con, and much smarter than he was. And he was in a position where he couldn't help

being frantic about money. The jury recommended clemency, and Whitney, as we all know, is a hanging judge. Besides, capital punishment is a dreadful business."

The Governor squinted. "Capital punishment," he said slowly, "is the law of the state."

Reed put all twelve folders down on the polished desk, then settled easily into the heavy leather chair that stood rather intimately beside the desk, facing out the window or toward the Governor. He looked out the window. "I'm not sure what you mean," he said uneasily. "The law of this state is also that the Governor has the right to commute sentences when it seems to him that some mitigation of justice is called for."

"Yes," the Governor said, leaning his chair back and reaching his arm onto the windowsill. "In unusual circumstances."

"These are unusual circumstances."

"That unusual, Frank?"

"I don't know if I understand this at all," Reed said. "There's a jury's recommendation for mercy."

"Whitney ignored it. I've talked to Whitney. He's a hanging judge, sure, but he had reasons. This man killed three people—three. He did it because he was sticking them up, and something happened. He planned to stick them up. The fact that he didn't plan to kill them doesn't make a damn bit of difference, under our laws or anybody else's laws."

"Billy, cut this out," Reed said, and turned the chair toward the Governor. "That boy's too stupid to plan anything."

"Well, I don't know. It seemed from the testimony that this particular holdup was his particular idea."

Reed stood up and flapped his long arms at his sides and stuck his hands in his pockets and prowled. "Billy"—his voice came to the Governor off the paneled rear wall of the office—"my understanding always was that you were opposed to killing people, just as I was—on principle. Now, was that understanding right or wrong?"

"Right."

"So you ought to be looking for excuses to justify exercising that principle, and you're not. Right?"

"Right. What do you say now?"

Reed swung on his heels at the back of the room, and with a distance now safely established he let the sick anger in his throat rise to his mouth. "I say it stinks."

The Governor swung in his chair and looked out the window himself, down the long grassy hill. People, mostly young people, were sitting on the slope on this fine, clear, moist spring day, turning their faces to the sun and back to the new, light-green grass, and to the sun again.

"I'm sorry," Reed said.

"It's all right, Frank."

"Just tell me why," Reed said. "Why does this kid have to burn?"

"I don't know that he has to," the Governor said. "But, Jesus, he's not worth saving. So he was never convicted before—he's been mixed up in some shady work or another pretty near all his life, trucking spoiled food to cheap restaurants, hanging around gyp-joint bars and crooked clubhouses. The way he was living he was sure to fit into a real crime someday, and once he got a gun in his hand

he was going to kill somebody. So he did. So a jury recommended clemency, which juries are always doing because otherwise they'd feel nervous. Whitney disregarded it because he felt the man's whole life showed a criminal bias. Now you put it up to me. Maybe I ought to commute, but god damn it"—the Governor had got himself annoyed, he was a little angry now—"it's not a clear case."

"It is if you're looking for a clear case," Reed said, still across the room.

"I'm obviously not."

"Why?"

"For the love of God, Frank, do you have to ask questions when you know the answers? Don't you trust your intelligence?"

"I don't trust what it tells me."

"Why? What are we running here, a high-school civics class? I think it might be politically unwise to let Mancioni out of the chair. It leaves too big an opening, brings back the October scandals. I want to be president, for reasons let's hope we both admit are not dishonorable. If I'm going to get to be president I can't be politically unwise. I've got a complicated case here, and you want me to let my emotional bias against capital punishment fly me over the clouds into an action that isn't dictated by the facts and would almost certainly hurt me politically. You saw that editorial today about the laundry bribes. They were aiming it at me, though I had nothing to do with it. Do you think Ransom and Irving would stop a moment before using Mancioni, knowing that commutation is always unpopular? Do you?"

Reed stood his ground. "I can't see that with a man's

life here or gone—a real man, still breathing—you'd let politics dictate your actions."

"Politics isn't dictating anything," the Governor said. "First I considered the facts. The facts were ambiguous. So now I'm letting myself be swayed, gently, by a political argument. I'll freely admit it isn't the sort of story you'd like to tell high-school kids, but there's nothing so vicious about it, either."

Reed had been prowling again; now he came in front of his chair, kicked out his feet and plopped down. "Hell of it is," he said conversationally, "I don't think the facts are ambiguous."

"That isn't what you mean," the Governor said, shaking his head. "The facts are obviously ambiguous. What you mean is that you think I considered the political argument on the way to my finding that the facts were ambiguous; and if I hadn't stumbled into the political argument I'd have reasoned it out to a commutation. Right?"

"Yes."

"All right. I'll admit it."

"I don't like it."

"Yes," the Governor said. "I sort of thought you didn't. But let's get ourselves a little sense of perspective here. You've met most of them—is there anybody besides myself in this convention fight that you'd really like to see president of the United States? That you wouldn't be yellow-scared might become president of the United States?"

Reed shrugged his shoulders, his eyes wide and bright on the Governor.

"My God, how long does this poor country have to be

misgoverned? What's important? That one idiot murderer should live or that the world should be led with some intelligence for the next four years? Let's try," he said, "let's try to live with the facts."

"I think," Reed said carefully, "that you lessen your usefulness as president if you get to the office dishonestly—this way."

"That's straight enough," the Governor said, and grinned with the pleasure of a full argument. "That's straight enough. But maybe we can make it straighter. Ends and means?"

"So," said Reed flatly. "Ends and means."

"Magazine articles!" the Governor said triumphantly. "You've been corrupted. What were you doing in my class? Didn't I teach you enough history to prove the stupidity of that one? Remember, boy. Nothing valuable has ever got done—ever in any time, in any place—without the most painful labor, and damage to almost everybody involved. Great deeds are done for our children, not for us—for us they always stink with doing, doing is always corrupt and one-sided and self-seeking in one way or another. Intelligence, a sense of perspective, a sense of proportion—they're what's needed. Principles without these qualities are worse than worthless—they're dangerous, like Calvin's principles, or Lenin's principles, or the principles of those early Christian idiots who destroyed Mediterranean civilization. Look. I assure you that if the facts had been staring clear in this case I'd have commuted sentence without a moment's worry about the politics of it. But the facts aren't that clear, so I've got the right to bring

every argument around onto the problem—principle, intelligence, perspective . . . politics. Do you accept it?"

Reed was slumped low in the chair, his long legs reaching out, his feet pointing up into the air. He shook his head. "You assure me?" he said. "Think back—the right decision is the right politics over the long run. If the convention weren't so near you'd let Mancioni live. If this question had come up three months ago, you'd have let Mancioni live."

"Maybe that's true," the Governor said. "Maybe it is."

"What's worse," said Reed precisely, "it's not just a question of the convention. If the convention had been today, and this question had come up three months ago, you'd have let Mancioni live."

"So you think it's not a change in time," the Governor said slowly, staring at Reed. "You think it's a change in me."

Reed said nothing; the Governor swung his chair again, and looked out again at the lawn and the sunshine and the shadow of the great dome on the grass, and wished he were sitting on a bench, cursing the government. He swung around and looked Reed dead in the eye. "Maybe that's true, too," he said. "I must say I hope it isn't. All my fine arguments, eh?"

"They're good arguments," Reed said. "I'm just telling you what I think. I think you've either got principles or you don't. If you don't, you're no damn good."

"You want out, Frank?"

Reed shook his head. "I'm stuck with you," he said. "Iris was telling me just today, I'm nothing but a pale copy of the great Clelland. No personality of my own

any more. Probably true. That's why this means so much to me, I suppose. But I hate to see a man die so senselessly."

"I'll think about it some more, Frank. My God, I'll try. But it's got to be my baby. This once, you can't tell me how to handle it."

"Sure." Reed pulled himself high in the chair and lifted his weight on his hands on the arms. Suspended above his problems, he said, "Let's have lunch on the bargain—crack a bottle of wine at Carlini's. Iris is meeting me. I won't badger you again with this till tonight."

The Governor looked at his calendar. "Right," he said. "Let's have lunch. With Iris."

As Reed left he pulled the folders in front of him and began to read. But when the door closed he looked up at it, at the Seal of Office in relief on the wood door, waxed and shining in the artificial light.

A few moments later the door opened again and Reed stuck his head in the opening. "Iris just called," he said. "Helen's coming in town to do some shopping, and she's going to have lunch with her at our place. So I'm disinvented. Are you willing to have lunch with just me?"

"It's a letdown," the Governor admitted. "But I guess it won't be too dull."

"I'll pick you up at a quarter to one?"

"Fine."

The door began to close, and the Governor called: "How long is Helen going to be in?"

"Iris didn't say."

"Okay. Quarter to one."

Chapter Two

PAUL ADAMS and Billy Reed knew that they were cousins, but it was not a fact that interested them much. They did not fight with each other, and they could exchange the time of day without any great discomfort; but neither looked forward to the other's occasional visits. Still they enjoyed riding in the car, and found travel itself somewhat broadening, and had no objection to looking over whatever toys had been gathered by the opposition during the months that came between meetings. So the atmosphere was restrained but reasonably polite when they met at the door to Iris' apartment and with their mothers quickly moved to the nursery.

Iris and Helen stood by the wall in Billy's room and watched their sons comparing notes. "I'm nuts about that turtleneck sweater," Iris said.

"I wish you could talk Paul into it. He thinks it's sissified. I don't know—maybe it makes him itch and he won't admit it."

"You let him wear it anyway?"

"Sure. Paul knows that if he itches he can scratch."

"Where'd you get it?"

"From New York—by mail," Helen said. "An ad in the *Times* magazine."

"You do a lot of shopping by mail, don't you?"

"Just about all the clothes shopping," Helen said absently, watching her son squirm as he reached an arm out for a gyro-driven miniature car. It was blue; his own was red; and he was obviously curious to find out if it ran differently. "It works," said Billy in a bored voice; there was a difference of nearly sixteen months between them. There was a difference of nearly three years between Iris and Helen.

"So you're sort of breaking precedent, coming down here to shop," Iris said.

"Oh, I'm not here to go shopping," Helen said. "You knew that."

"You know," said Iris with some amusement, "I didn't. I thought when you said you wanted to go shopping you wanted to go shopping."

"No. I just didn't want to disturb you over the phone. Or confuse Paul. I think the time has come for me and you to join brains against Irving, and see if we can't shoot him back to Europe."

Paul had got hold of the car, and spun the heavy wheel in the center, and set the car down on the linoleum floor. It shot off toward the corner, cracked into a leg of the table and nuzzled the table toward the window, then spun around and climbed halfway up the leg of a large teddy bear beside Billy's small chair. The bear fell over on its

side and dropped an affectionate arm on the car. The car rose on its hind wheels and then turned over on its back, all four wheels churning furiously.

Billy giggled. "Bet you can't do it again."

"Bet I can." Paul took the car, righted the bear, shifted the table that quarter inch back to position, then looked for the spot from which he had launched the experiment.

"Right here, boy," said Helen, pointing to a linoleum square by the white bookcase which housed the toys. Paul looked at the square, shook his head seriously and took the square beside it. The car shot between the legs of the table and ground angrily at the wall, without success.

"There," said Billy.

"I was pretty close," said Paul philosophically. "It's hard. You can't do it every time."

"Bet I can."

"Try it. You'll see."

"If you want to join brains," Iris said, "maybe we'd better change the plans. I can pull Manny off making lunch for all of us and send her out with the kids to Howard Johnson's, or somewhere, and we can make our own lunch. I wouldn't want to risk having the boys overawed by the cranial electricity."

"Why don't you do that?" said Helen, and Iris left. Billy was still measuring distances with his eyes; as his mother stepped out of the room he gave the gyro a vigorous spin, held it with his finger, and slowly lowered the car to the floor. As he withdrew his finger he turned the car well off its course; it sped away from him and out the door after his mother; they heard it hit into the far side of the hall, growl and head off again. Both boys ran

out of the nursery to follow it, Billy somewhat guiltily, but Helen stayed against the wall by the bookcase, and wondered what Iris would say, what Iris was feeling about herself and Paul and the real Billy. It had taken her nearly three months, but she had made up her mind now; she was, she thought ruefully, a campaign worker, one of the deserving dozens whose unsung labors we sing so loudly.

"Please, Billy," Iris said in the living room, "not on the rug. You'll chew it all up."

"Can we run it in the hall?"

"Not now," said Iris firmly. "Manitoba is going to take you to lunch at Howard Johnson's, and buy you twenty-eight kinds of ice cream."

Paul came running up the hall, hotly pursued by the toy car. "Mama, can I go with Billy to Howard Johnson's? Can I eat twenty-eight kinds of ice cream?"

"You may if you can, and I guess you can," said Helen, stepping out of the nursery to catch her son as he came toward her, and lift him in the air—briefly, he was getting too heavy for such nonsense.

"Hey!" said Paul, as the car shot past him again in the opposite direction. "My turn!"

"Now, none of that," said Helen cheerfully, still holding him by the shoulders. "Hey is an ugly sound. And besides you're leaving right now."

But, of course, it was not right now. Permission was asked and granted for one more turn with the car. And then there was a brief discussion of what could or could not be done with the car at Howard Johnson's. And a getting-into of coats, and a short but concentrated farewell scene. Then the two women tottered back to the living

room and toppled onto opposite ends of the couch and looked at each other until finally they laughed.

"So," said Iris eventually, "brain me."

"I want to get it straight first," Helen said, and stopped laughing. "What's he after?"

"Billy's scalp."

"What good does he think that will do anybody?"

"It will give him pleasure," Iris said, and now she was serious, too.

"And why? Why does he want it?"

"It's you, of course—his little sister, stark ruined by big, bad man."

"Is that really all?" Helen said. "He's been a big bad man, or boy, himself, and I don't think that kind of hypocrite. Maybe I'm wrong."

"Well, no," said Iris, "it's more than that. Do you really want to know?"

"I, too," said Helen sharply, "have a brain."

"It's rather queer," Iris said reflectively, "and maybe I'm wrong. But I think the whole point of it is that Billy's a goy. He might take one or the other. He might take your ruination as partly your own damn foolishness, and he'd hate the man who did it, but not this way. Not this way at all. And he's taken my marriage to a filthy Gentile with some decency, though not a great deal. The two together is too much, it makes him squeamish—ruined, and by a goy."

Helen squirmed uncomfortably. "It's medieval," she said.

"Well, not entirely. He's not a very likable guy, our brother, but let's be fair to him. It isn't all medieval. If

a nice Jewish boy had got you with child and abandoned you, he'd have thought of dozens of reasons, mostly evil to be sure, but reasons, why there wasn't any marriage, and why you had to give up your brilliant career—he was very proud of you, you know—and sit alone somewhere, unwept, unhonored and unsung. With Billy his mind sticks at the one reason: Billy didn't marry you because you were a Jew."

"Oh, it's so damn silly."

"No," Iris said gently, "it isn't so damn silly. I don't agree with Irving, not for a minute, because Irving thinks it's all a conscious plot, that Billy never cared for you and threw you away like an old shoe when he had squeaked his pleasure. That's nonsense. But I've been thinking about it three months now, since he said it out, and it may be—it just may be—that Billy, quite unconsciously, mind you, was able to consider letting you go to child unmarried because you were different in some way he didn't understand. Irving's way. I think it's worrying Billy, too."

Helen stood up. "Let's have lunch," she said.

"You stay away from my stove. You're too sensitive to touch it." Iris got up slowly, then stepped briskly toward the kitchen. She tapped her sister lightly on the backside as she passed, and Helen followed. "Fried egg sandwiches good enough for you?" Iris said over her shoulder.

"Sure."

"Come on in and keep me company."

Helen went into the kitchen, pulled out the blue step-ladder and sat on it, her long legs hanging off the ground. "I can't see how you listen to Irving on that," she said. "You know the whole story. I didn't even tell *you* I was

pregnant until a month after Billy had been nominated, and he was campaigning around the state. Billy never knew it. I didn't tell him until two weeks after the primaries, when I was beginning to look it a little, and I didn't think he should risk people seeing him with a pregnant girl. What could he have done then?"

"Maybe," said Iris, breaking the eggs into a big, bright copper skillet, "he could have done something."

"He was running for governor," Helen said plaintively. "He was known all through the state. Suppose he'd divorced his wife, quick, in Mexico or somewhere—it would have cost him every chance. He couldn't do that to the people who'd nominated him and worked for him. It would have been brutally unfair."

"The time comes," said Iris, putting the bread in the toaster, "when you've got to be unfair to somebody."

"Okay," Helen said. "So he could have divorced his wife, quick, maybe quitting the campaign first because that would be best for the party, they could nominate somebody else. Then he could have taken me to some J. P., and we'd have been married. These little actions would have received a little publicity, I'd imagine. Just a little. And then, when I gave birth some four or five months after we were married, that would have been worth a little publicity too. A little—Jesus, do you think I'd have wanted anything like that? Do you think that would have been better for me?"

"He could have looked," said Iris, buttering the bread, "for something to do. He didn't."

"I don't know how slowly your mind works," Helen said bitterly, "but his is quick. Ten minutes after I told

him he knew there was nothing he could do. I knew it before I told him. He hated me for that, a little, for putting him in a position where there was no decent way to behave. But I had to do it."

"We've talked about this before," Iris said, placing the spatula under the first egg, "but I've never understood what the hell you were talking about. What did you think you were doing, keeping your little secret?"

"I was minding my own business."

"I never could make you out," Iris said, placing the slices of toast atop the eggs and moving the sandwiches onto her pale china.

"I wanted him governor," Helen said, "I wanted him president. I'm not jealous. Before Jackie Ransom died I used to sit for hours and listen to her play the piano, and never even wonder whether I was better than she was. I'm willing to say that Billy's job is more important than I am, because it is, and what's opened up for him in politics—how could I ask him to go back to educating state-college kids? Why, he could educate a country now."

"Educate it in what?" said Iris, taking the plates out to the dining room. "Pour the milk."

Helen took the glasses from the rubber rack beside the sink, opened the icebox and poured the milk. Iris came back to the kitchen and took the glasses from her. "I'm sorry I said that," she said. "I know what you mean. I just think you're crazy."

"And then," Helen said, "you know, I love him. That counts, too."

They sat down at the corner of the long table, by the

window that was the wall. "A man's place," said Iris suddenly, "is in the home. Did you ever think of that?"

Helen steadily finished her sandwich, then said, "So?"

"So I'm sick of it," Iris said, and took a determined swig of milk. "The two of you give me a pain in the ass—the three of you, when you come down to it. You're all of you no more than shadows of that man, the two of you sort of pale and languid shadows, and Irving a kind of black, malicious shadow. I yelled at Frank about it this morning. We all have our own work to do, and we ought to do it, instead of mooning about the feet of the colossus, sniffing. It doesn't smell that good. So the saint's body doesn't putrefy, so what? Maybe he's been eating embalming fluid all his life." She stopped for more milk, and looked for Helen to comment; Helen sat straight in her chair, in the pianist's posture, and said nothing. "Go ahead," Iris added. "Tell me it's a far, far nobler thing you do, and I'll give you a glass of milk in the face."

"What work, Iris?"

"What do you mean, what work?"

"Frank's a lawyer, specialty, trusts. He could make a lot of money. But he inherited a lot of money." Helen held up her hand and clicked off one finger. "You and I," she said, ticking off two more, "we raise kids. We were born unlucky—we were always going to raise kids. And Irving," she said, dropping her hand below the table, "Irving's a gossip, and if it wasn't this gossip it would be some other, somewhere. So let's be shadows. If we're not shadows, we're ciphers."

"And Billy," said Iris, imitating, "Billy's a politician. A lovely guy, but a politician."

"That's not true," said Helen.

"No?" said Iris. Then: "Do you want dessert?"

"No," Helen said, and pushed back the light chair over the carpet and stood up. "Iris," she said, "you're my big sister and it means a lot, but face up to it—you're not my mother. You're not Frank's mother, either."

"Sure I am, a little."

"Not a little, not at all. You're nobody's mother but Billy's." Helen grinned. "Young Billy's."

"And what the hell are you, so noble and self-sacrificing?"

"I'm Paul's mother. His son's."

"Oh, all right, all right," Iris said, and stood up herself. "What I can't see is why you want him to win, why you want to see him president," she said, putting her glass on her plate. "He doesn't need the money any more than Frank," she said, picking up both mats with her free hand and shaking them vigorously onto the table. "He's got thirty thousand a year," she said, tucking the mats under her arm, "and he can make another twelve-five teaching, even here. I know what you see in him," she said, taking the napkins and bunching them into one rag, "and I approve. He's a little old, maybe," she said, wiping the crumbs off the table onto the plate, "but he'd make you a fine husband. And that's what he ought to be doing," she said belligerently, leading her sister into the kitchen. "Husbanding and teaching, not presidenting. He likes teaching, too."

"He used to like teaching," Helen said.

"Too uppity for it now?"

"Oh, stop it, Iris, forget about it. I know you don't like

it all the way, but you're on my side, not Irving's, and you're here with me. And I want Billy to be president and Frank wants Billy to be president, and you're not our mother, but you're very, very closely attached to both of us, and if you'd got anything out of all the history Billy taught you you'd want him to be president, too. So let's see if we can't cook up some way to stop Irving." She began rolling the sleeves of her sweater. "Where's an apron?"

"These dishes?" Iris said, peering into the sink. "What do you think I have a maid for? To take the child to lunch?"

"Then let's retire to your attractive living room like old school pals who haven't seen each other for years, and rehash the past and find if we can't see some way to make our brother Irving shut his dirty little mouth."

"Are you Irving's mother?" said Iris; it rankled.

"I wish I were," Helen said as they went through the dining room, back to their positions on the couch, "I'd spank his little rear off." She sat down and kicked her shoes onto the carpet, propped herself high against the arm and put her feet onto the middle cushion. Iris sat at the other end, and looked toward the map of the Northwest Passage in the plain gold frame.

"Blackmail," Iris said. "I remember when he started. You don't, you were a kid. They had a mimeograph at school; they used it to run off programs for plays and all that sort of thing, and Irving was sports-crazy. He was probably sports-crazy when he was four years old. Some big baseball player had come from here, and probably got ridden out on a rail, and Irving sent him a letter in

his childish scrawl and asked him who was going to win some ball game, and he got a long letter back—the man was sort of tickled, he'd gone to the same school and he hadn't been back here for dozens of years. Irving—he must have been all of eleven—went down to the school office, and they told him about stencils. He sat home every night for a week, writing, and then he went back to the office and used his allowance money to buy two stencils and four hundred sheets of mimeo paper—I think they charged him a dime. One of the secretaries worked over his spelling with him, and he sat down at her typewriter and tried to cut the stencil, one key at a time. Finally the girl typed it out for him and ran it off on the machine—*Sports News*, editor Irving Moss, it said up top in capital letters, one cent. Half of it was this letter and the other half was Irving, about how this ballplayer had gone to our school and what a great shortstop or batsman or whatever it was he was, and how he was going to win the championship for his team. It was awful. Daddy bought a hundred copies to give away to everybody he knew."

"I remember it a little," Helen said. "Daddy told me a long time ago. He got me some penny candy with his profits."

"That's right. He didn't get me anything, because I was laughing at him, I guess."

"Did he ever put out another edition?"

"He put out five more. He made himself a real pest in that school office. They kept raising the price of paper on him—I think they were making a profit by the time they were done. Daddy took it all through the baseball season, but when baseball was over and Irving did one about foot-

ball, he saw he was just bailing out the ocean, and he didn't buy any. *Sports News* went bankrupt."

"I don't remember that," Helen said. "How did Irving take it?"

"Pretty well. I guess he cried at first, but as I remember he decided it was just that Daddy wasn't so interested in football as he was in baseball, and that was okay. By the time the baseball season came around again Doctor Turner—you remember him, he was principal there while you were in school—had found a little extra money somewhere in the budget and set up a school paper, and Irving was news editor or something."

"Then in college," Helen said, and giggled, "he was editor of *The Bugle* when he was just a junior."

"Yes. My God, the communism of it!" Iris said. "And the time they fired that homosexual instructor, and Irving decided it was because the poor little mouse'd had a story published in the *New Masses*. Them was the days. He had nearly half the alumni with him, muttering about those money-bag Republicans on the board of trustees."

"And now?" said Helen, and the fun went out of the meeting.

Iris sighed. "Now it's just bad luck. Bad luck all around. You can't stop him, Helen."

"Can't I at all? Can't I go to him and threaten dramatically that if he doesn't leave the country or something like that I'll reveal it was me—that if he's going to ruin Billy he'll have to ruin me, too?"

"He won't buy it," Iris said. "He's too intelligent. You wouldn't do it because of the way it would hurt Billy, even if you didn't have any other reasons. He can see

that. Flesh of our flesh, sister dear, bone of our bone, blood of our blood."

"Don't you think it would even scare him?"

"Maybe for five minutes. No more. You have a better chance going to him and begging him."

"He knows how I feel. But I'm his baby sister, so he knows better."

"Look. Are you sure it makes all that difference? Remember, there was a president, name of Cleveland. His little bastard actually came out in the campaign," she added, scowling at her own choice of phrase, "which is more than Irving will do to yours, hatred and all. It didn't stop him."

Helen shook her head wearily. "He was running against a crook, and it came out after he had the nomination. It's different then, one man against one other, and there's always dirt about everybody. Always. Once you've got a candidate he's great whatever comes out about him, and you'll fight to the death for his honor. But your nominee has got to be stainless. No," she added, as the door slammed behind them in the foyer, "it makes a difference."

The children squabbled loudly around the closet. "Did you have a good lunch?" Iris called.

"Yes," her son said a little dubiously. "Manny wouldn't let me have a hot dog."

"I would not," said Manitoba. "They're not healthy."

"So what did you have?" Iris said, getting up from the couch.

"Fried egg sandwiches," Paul said. "On toast."

"Were they good?" Helen said brightly.

"For dessert?" Iris said. "Did you have twenty-eight different kinds of ice cream?"

"No," Paul said. "Three."

"With bananas," said Billy.

"And nuts."

"And whipped cream."

"And chocolate sauce."

"In a big plate."

"Now," said Iris, "that's what I call healthy."

"I had one myself," said Manitoba, sensing the mild rebuke. "I wouldn't let them darlings eat anything I didn't eat myself."

"And very right you are, Manny," said Iris. "Now let's get back to the nursery so they can work some of it off."

They followed the children back through the living room, and Iris put an arm around Helen's waist. "I'm sorry I couldn't help."

"Do you think Frank could help?"

"He doesn't know Irving. Nobody knows Irving—just you and me."

"I can't think what to do. Honey, I just can't think."

"Don't think, then," Iris said. "Give Billy credit. He's my son's godfather, so he's sure to get good luck."

Back in the foyer the doorbell rang, and as they turned around they saw Manitoba grinning furiously into the doorway. "Governor," she said, "what a nice surprise!"

Then the Governor stepped into the foyer and Helen was running toward him, her blonde hair bouncing all around her head, and falling into his arms and crying, "Billy. Billy, oh, Billy!"

Smiling stupidly he took some wisps of hair from her

cheek and brushed them back behind her ear. Then he pushed her slightly away from him, held her and looked at her, and bent down and kissed her, very delicately, and then stepped away.

"Manny!" Iris called, stepping vigorously toward them. "Could you get the hell out of here for the next couple of hours?"

"What did you say, Missuz Reed?"

"I said scram. Put on your coat and leave. Go to Mr. Reed's office and he'll give you a pass to get into the legislature and watch the debates. Take a trolley ride. Take a cab—I'll pay for it. But take off, go away, get out, geh aveck! I love you, but now I want to be alone."

Manitoba was backing into the closet with the Governor's coat. "Yes, mad'm," she said, putting an arm in the Governor's coat, then taking it out. "Yes, mad'm." She grabbed her own coat off the hanger and stopped for a moment in the foyer.

"Out!"

"Yes, Missuz Reed. Yes. Good-by, Governor, sir. Good-by, Mrs. Adams."

"Good-by, Manitoba," said the Governor, his hand still on Helen's shoulder. "You know, Mrs. Reed has these fits once in a while, but I've had the best men in the state examine her, and she isn't really dangerous. You don't have to worry."

"No, sir," Manitoba said, and her coat over her arm she left.

"Now," said Iris, "I'm going to take the children somewhere and you two can be alone. I know enough about you two. I don't want to hear any more. Not me. You just

make it a big surprise, and I can read about it in the papers. But this time, please, no babies. Paul! Billy!"

The two figures emerged from the nursery, and then ran toward their mothers. "Uncle Billy," cried Billy, "tell me a story!"

"My Uncle Billy," said Paul crossly. "Not yours."

"Mine too."

They stopped and looked at each other cautiously. "He's my Uncle Billy," said Paul, "and he has a big black car."

Helen went to her son and bent over him. "How did you remember that?"

"And he gave me a big horse on two rockers."

"That was a long time ago," the Governor said.

"You're my Uncle Billy too," Billy said. "Aren't you?"

"He's everybody's Uncle Billy," said Iris, "but not right now. Right now you and me and Paul are going out to get another banana split."

Her son considered this briefly and then soberly nodded his head. "All right," he said.

"Paul too?" said Helen.

"If you want to yell at somebody," said Iris, "yell at *him*. Come on, into your coats."

But as she pulled Paul, the Governor reached out and took the boy's arm. "Good-by, Paul," he said.

The boy looked up. "Good-by, Uncle Billy."

"Good-by."

Then the door closed behind Iris and the two children, and Helen took his hand and led him into the living room and stood on tiptoe again and kissed him. "Tell me," she said, "tell me everything."

"You know everything," he said, and stepped to the

chair in the curve of the piano, and sat down. "Everything, and it's pretty awful, isn't it?"

"No," she said, and came and sat on the floor beside his chair, her head resting against his leg. "Not at all."

"Selfish?"

"No."

"Worse," he said, and it wasn't a question.

"If that's my brother Irving again," she said somewhat aimlessly, "I'm going to ring his son-of-a-bitching neck."

He took her head between his hands and shook it happily. "You'll do no such thing. Live and let live, and let who will be clever."

"Would you like me to play?" she said, gesturing toward the piano, and then she regretted it. "Damn," she said. "Is that the only thing I can do?"

"No. Not even the most important. Answer me some questions."

"What about?"

"What is it always?"

She grinned up at him. "Yourself."

"Question one," he said gloomily.

"Shush."

"I can't shush."

"Then have it out, in the most wretched, the most obnoxious, the most historically accurate terms you can think of."

"Yes," he said, "yes, indeed. It isn't you, Helen, or that doesn't bother me so much, because I know about that, as well as I know about anything, and a screaming lot more than that hack journalist. It's you and Ira Field, taken

together, the people I've harmed for the unusual reasons —"

"I'm happy as a bird—"

"Not a very happy bird. Let's stop telling stories. It doesn't happen to me often, only twice really that I remember—but that twice I took the soft way out, in my own life with you, in politics with Ira. There were reasons and thoughts and judgments all over the lot, both times, but both times there I was, rolling down the slope instead of climbing. It happens to everybody, sure, but it was you and Ira. And, as Irving so gently pointed out, you and Ira are two of the few problems I've had that didn't go to school with me, or play in the same part of the park, or whatever way he put it. That's a fact. How do you get away from a fact?"

"Say 'Jew.'"

His hand, which had been caressing her hair, now stopped, but an instant later he said, "Jew."

"All right," she said, and stood up. "Forget about it."

"My God, how do we know," he said, looking up at her unhappily, "how do we ever know why? What can we do to find out?"

"Phooey," she said, to her own surprise, and smiled, and went to the piano and played what came into her head, which turned out to be the most heartbreakingly beautiful thing she knew. And since it was also one of the most difficult things she knew, in a moment her fears and the Governor's anxieties and all the rest of the problems of the world were gone, and there were only her fingers on the keys, and the sound from the shaking wires, and she was the sound itself.

On the chair the Governor listened, and looked to the wall to the map which had once hung on his wall (Iris, too, had gone to the other school), and to the toy car that sat on the carpet, a racer ready to go. He turned in his chair and looked at Helen, who was looking almost blankly at him, the certainty of the world in her eyes; and he thought to hell with it, this was truth enough. He stood up and stretched his arms, pulled his shoulders back toward each other, and walked around behind the piano bench and touched her on the shoulder.

She stopped playing and he said, "I've stopped thinking. I can't do anything now and I won't. I'm stuck at the selfish thought: anything can happen, but either way I win."

"I win, too," she said, "either way." She spun from the bench and to her feet and into his arms, both of them leaning forward, the piano bench between them, and she said, whispering, "Can I see you tonight?"

"Oh, Helen, any other night, it can't be this one. They've got that stupid reporters' show tonight, and I've got to be there. I can't get out of it."

"Afterward."

"It won't break up until nearly midnight."

"I can wait for you."

"Where?"

"At your place."

Gently he took her arms from around his neck and stepped back and looked into her eyes and shouted, "My God, yes, we can! Now, here, here—I'll call Jack. He has a sister in the country. I'll send him packing on a visit now."

"I'll leave a note for Iris, telling her to take care of Paul—it serves her right."

"Yes," the Governor said. "God, you make me a boy again, with one thing on my mind."

"Do you good," she said.

Chapter Three

THOMAS COLLINS, warden of Farmsville State Prison, was a peppy little man in his early forties, with a small pot belly and a fondness and a fear for the press. He was not particularly sensitive—stupid would be a better word—but the evenings before executions were unpleasant to him. He felt that it was somehow unfair that his routine actions, the simple accomplishment of his appointed rounds, should cause a man's death, that he should have to pull the switch—shoot the gun would be as good a way to put it—and kill a man who had never, when you came right down to it, done anything to him. The afternoons before executions he was surly to his large and unkempt wife and his four convict servants; and in the evenings he would have been unhappy, except that his friends of the press came and entertained him with their funny stories and their cheerful contempt for the condemned man and their joy in the distilled root that takes the reason prisoner.

He stood by the door of his apartment on the second

floor of the south wing of the prison, and shouted down to the men carrying the cases of liquor up the steel stairs. A case of scotch, a case of bourbon, half a case of straight rye, half a case of Canadian; two bottles of Tennessee whiskey, a bottle of Southern Comfort for Mrs. Collins, and two bottles of cheap blended whiskey for the trustees. He checked off the list, bottle by bottle, as the convicts carried it up from the truck parked on the sloping concrete of the courtyard. It was all here; his friends would have enough to drink. He trotted downstairs himself to tip the driver and look around at the prison walls still white in the six o'clock shadows. At the other end the lights were on behind the bars on the dining-room windows, and six thousand men were eating dinner in long rows on long tables, the guards spotted around the room in locked pill-boxes, and everybody safe.

Warden Collins sighed at the end of a fine day, and the twinge of irritation at the execution that would end the long night; and he walked slowly back up the stairs, looking through between the steel steps at the whitewashed stairwell, and went into his large modern kitchen. The four men, servants supplied to him by penal custom, were quietly at work, setting the table, cooking the meal, putting new ice trays in the freezer, polishing the glasses, making the sandwiches that would be served at midnight. He was pleased with them, and he forgot the condemned man in the condemned cell.

"How about a drink, boys?"

The convicts turned around without a word, grinning, and Collins pulled out one of the bottles of bourbon and opened it with a twist of his hands. Silently, one of the convicts

took five shot glasses from the gleaming row on the cabinet by the sink, and placed them on the table. Collins poured five shots, took his and said, "Cheers."

"All the best," said one of the cons, and they all drank. Then the prisoners turned back to their work cheerlessly. Collins cursed. "Maggie! Where are you? It's time for dinner."

"All right," the edgy voice called from the bedroom, "Jesus, how you yell. I'm coming."

"Remember, we got a party tonight."

"Yeah," the voice said, "a picnic."

The warden's apartment was air-conditioned, because the job is an unpleasant one anyway; and, on the customary theory that condemned men deserve better treatment than the ordinary convicts who merely live in a prison, the condemned block was also air-conditioned. It had been considered by the firm of penal architects employed on this job that the sight of condemned prisoners, or even the windows of condemned cells, was unsettling to other convicts and the general public. To save money and carry out this theory, they placed the condemned cells in the basement below the warden's apartment. Each of the twelve cells in the block was a windowless room scientifically lit by fluorescent fixtures recessed into the walls, just below the ceilings. The ceiling was high and white; the walls smooth and pastel; the floor a linoleum laid over the usual concrete. In each cell the furnishings consisted of a steel table and steel chair bolted to the concrete; and a steel bed, with a two-inch thickness of foam rubber, bolted to the wall. The table, the chair and the metal of the bed were all enameled the color of the walls, and the room was perfectly

square. In the three years since the prison had been opened, the ungrateful condemned had scratched ugly markings in the paint surfaces of five of the rooms; but Mancioni was in a room never before occupied, and he appreciated his luxurious surroundings, so like something in a movie. He was a well-behaved prisoner; the guards were sorry for him.

On this evening, while his fellow convicts in the dining room ate a stew that was mostly potatoes, Mancioni's dinner was steak, porterhouse of prime quality, specially purchased and specially prepared for the occasion. The guard who brought it to him stayed in his room, lounging by the door, as he ate; Mancioni was embarrassed.

"You eat?" he said.

"Sure," the guard said. "Just go ahead."

A moment later Mancioni said, "It's big. You take some."

"Nah," the guard said, "eat it up. Look," he added, and it was a guard's great compliment, the great favor he could administer or refuse, "would you like a drink?"

"A drink?"

"Whiskey."

"It's tonight they're gonna get me, isn't it?" Mancioni said suddenly. "They're gonna do it tonight."

"Yeah." The guard remembered other men with whom he had sympathized, men who had been pushed and almost carried to the chair, singing songs, some of them, not at all afraid.

"When?"

"Oh, it's a long time still," the guard said, shifting away from the wall. "There'll be a priest coming to tell you about it."

"A priest?" Mancioni said, and looked up at the guard.

"He'll help you," the guard said. "A bottle'd probably help you more. You eat—I'll get you some whiskey."

"A glass of beer," Mancioni said suddenly.

"You'd rather have beer?" the guard said incredulously.

"Yeah."

"You eat up. I'll get you a glass of beer. I'll get you some whiskey too."

2

The back of the swivel chair rested firmly against the radiator cover, and Moss' feet rested lightly on the desk in his cluttered cubicle. The typewriter was already pulled to its corner and covered; the two editorials sat in two clumps of flimsy paper under the telephone. Moss idly turned the pages of *Time*, reading the ads, waiting for Ransom to call again. He had instructions to come up to the apartment when his work was finished, but he liked to keep the son of a bitch waiting.

The telephone rang; he let it ring, three, four, five times. Then he picked it up. "Moss," he said loudly.

"What's been keeping you? We've both got to get to the show."

"I'm all dressed," said Moss mildly.

"Now, cut it out, Irving. Where's that editorial?"

"I guess it's all done, if you want to see it."

"Come on up," Ransom said, and hung up. Moss dropped his receiver in its cradle and made a face at it. He picked up his magazine again, read part of the science section and riffled on aimlessly. When he reached the back cover he threw the magazine into the corner wastebasket and

picked *Life* off his desk. Opening it in the middle, he came to O'Connor's feature, *The World's Greatest Violins*, four kodas and two black-and whites which O'Connor had submitted under the title *Fine Fiddles*. It was a damn shame O'Connor wouldn't be at the show, he thought sentimentally, a shame all around because he was the only one of these guys with any real life to him. But then, O'Connor was for Clelland, and after the knife Moss had this afternoon stuck into Clelland's back he wasn't so sure he would like to talk to O'Connor. He wasn't so sure at all. He read the paragraphs of captions under the pictures, thinking of O'Connor and wondering how O'Connor would react to the editorial; professionally, probably. The telephone rang again; this time he picked it up immediately.

"What the hell, Irving?"

"Well, I thought of a new angle," Moss said. "Worth working in."

"Come on, even if it isn't perfect. We don't want to look like pirates tonight; we've got to get there on time."

"I'll read it over once more, then I'll be right up. Have a drink."

"I've had a drink. Hurry."

Moss thought of the evening and knew he would hate it: the slaves permitted for this one night to laugh at their masters, the masters forced to relish whatever jokes were loosed, the false good-fellowship produced by liquor and theatrics, the pretended relaxation squeezed through tensions of fear and relevance. He lifted the telephone off the clumps of paper and picked them up gently. They were two editorials. One of them would run:

In countries under the Red Terror a lot of men died last night because of politics.

There was one who died here for more or less the same reason. His name was Louis Mancioni.

They fried him in the electric chair for murder. And he was guilty of murder, all right.

But there wasn't any public need to kill him.

Just a private need.

The big crime he committed was being born dumb. He was so dumb he couldn't earn a living.

He had three kids already and his wife was going to have a baby. He was so dumb he couldn't make a living for one, and here he had to make a living for five.

He didn't have any criminal record. But he met a hardened killer, a five-time loser, and the killer took him along on a stickup. He went along because he needed the money.

When the jury convicted him they recommended mercy. But Judge Whitney is old-fashioned. He believes murderers ought to die.

There's nothing wrong with an old-fashioned judge who's honest by his own beliefs. But there's a lot wrong with a new-fangled governor who's commuted six sentences in five years, and refused to commute this one.

We don't know exactly why he refused.

But we can guess.

There's a grapevine that runs through the underworld, and sometimes it's got information the ordinary citizen never hears about.

Mancioni wasn't in that underworld, but his friend was.

So maybe Mancioni heard something.

Maybe he heard about state legislators bribed by the laundry operators to pass a law making sure the big laundries would get the linen business from the state hospitals and the charity hospitals. Maybe he heard about the Governor signing that law.

Maybe he heard about where the Governor was that night of the little stickup.

Maybe he knew that on that very night the Governor was at an even bigger gambling place, a roadhouse called The One Spot, wining and dining and—what else?

Maybe he knew that somebody very close to the Governor had money in that gambling house.

Maybe he knew that the joint was raided that night—and that the next day the boss men of the state police, the men responsible for the raid, were canned. By the Governor, naturally.

You never can tell what a man will hear just by having his ears open near the grapevine.

And a man gets bitter in jail.

Sometimes he gets to the point where he talks. . . .

We don't know, of course.

We're only guessing.

Moss could see it on the front page of tomorrow's paper, in bold face, two wide columns, heavily leaded. It was amazing, he thought, what you could do when you wanted to do it, and in his head there formed again the key sentences of the articles he would write to follow up, to document the charges, so to speak.

And to take care of the other eventuality there was the other editorial:

If you were around this town back in October you'll remember that four men got shot and killed in the worst stickup this state has ever seen.

It was the worst sort of crime.

A trigger-happy gunman just walked into a room and shot at everybody he saw.

The cops did an efficient job and caught him quick. The jury

did an efficient job and convicted him. The judge did an efficient job and gave him the death sentence.

Last night the Governor did an efficient job, too—but the wrong way around. He let the killer off.

The killer's name was Louis Mancioni, and you've heard a lot of sentimental eyewash about him.

They say he was just a poor slob trapped into a stickup because he needed the money.

But the testimony at the trial proved that this stickup was his idea.

They say he had a clean record before this one.

But the D. A.'s office found out he'd worked for a crooked restaurant supply house, trucking poisoned food. If that's not criminal, what is?

Besides, how did he meet the con who partnered him in this stickup? Playing handball at the Y?

When you pin them down, these propagandists for a murderer wind up saying you shouldn't kill a man in the electric chair, even for three murders.

Well, you know where that idea came from.

Communist Russia.

It got picked up by their little pals the British Socialists.

Judge Whitney never had any such ideas, which is why he's a good judge. But maybe the Governor isn't so old-fashioned as Judge Whitney.

That's one explanation. There are others.

Now, we don't know exactly why the Governor did it.

But we've got some guesses.

There's a grapevine that runs . . .

Moss skimmed through the succeeding paragraphs; he knew them well by now. He picked it up again just before the end:

You never can tell what a man will hear just by keeping his ears open near the grapevine.

And a man gets bitter when he's about to die.

He might even get bitter enough to open his mouth and sing a pretty song. . . .

Of course we're only guessing.

The execution was scheduled for four in the morning, and the presses could be held until the reporters at the prison had called in with the late results. In the afternoon the editorial, one or the other, would run again, buttressed by the pictures O'Connor would worm around tonight to get. It was a good beginning, a rocket launching. Billy, Irving thought, we caught up with you at last.

He swung off his chair and through the quiet newsroom toward the elevator, but he was not happy. It was like any other fight—worth winning because losing is a humiliation—but there was no joy in the winning. What difference did it make, after all, that William Clelland would not be president? It was still necessary to go to the Spoof and drink, to go home and sleep, to wake up and face another day's accretion of age. The just would still be helpless, the unjust successful; and there would be the same reasons why nothing could be done about it. Moss could see Ransom reading the editorials, sitting in his high-backed chair and wrinkled with old-fashioned glee; the thought was repulsive. The job had been worth doing, but it had accomplished nothing of high importance. Nothing of high importance was ever accomplished. Tomorrow was always like today, but maybe worse.

Then the elevator started up, and looking at the papers in his hand he felt the minimal pride that was the least a

man could get from a triumph. Let Ransom be pleased, he thought; hell, I'm pleased myself. Then the elevator door opened and Ransom, who had been standing in the hall waiting for him, snatched the papers from his hand.

"Personally," Moss said, making a distraction, "I hope the poor kid gets off. I wouldn't want to see him die."

"What?" Ransom said, looking up irritably, then glancing at his watch. "Why not? Why shouldn't he die?"

3

"Well," said the Governor, poking his head in the door, "all ready?"

Reed looked up from his desk. "Just got dressed—thought I'd sneak in another fifteen minutes' work."

"No," said the Governor. "Let's have a drink. You know how much better these affairs are if you don't go to them wholly conscious."

"You look as if you've already started loading."

"Ooo-ooh," said the Governor, looking over his shoulder, "maybe."

"Naturally," said Reed, slapping the folder shut, "if you're determined to badger me, I'll stop. But don't blame me if the state simply disappears tomorrow morning."

"Word of honor," said the Governor, and looked sly. "Did you get home this afternoon?"

"No, I changed here."

"Speak to Iris?"

"Too busy—she knows I won't be home till late."

"Fine," said the Governor. "Fine."

"What's up?"

"Ooo-ooh," said the Governor, "nothing much."

"Yes," said Reed thoughtfully, still at his desk. "And what about Mancioni?"

"Ooo-ooh, not now. Not now. After the ball is over."

"There won't be time."

"Nonsense. Of course there'll be time. There's always time."

4

The first of them came at a few minutes after eight, and by eight-thirty there was a steady stream—neighbors from town, sheriff's deputies, the sheriff himself and his wife, minor municipal functionaries, courthouse attachés—pouring through the prison gates and up the flight of stairs to the Collins' cozy, dull apartment. They were excited, but not indecently so, and most of their enthusiasm, to give them full credit, came from the promised presence of the press rather than the thought of a death to be watched. They stayed on their feet, because that was the way sophisticated people looked at parties, and they were quiet. The men stood around the curved leatherette bar which had been installed before the mock fireplace, and swapped tales of crime and violence with the bartender, a trustee in for life. One of the new deputies got overwhelmed by the thought of free liquor, and by nine o'clock he was singing dirty sea chanties. The bartender won the first laugh of the evening by suggesting that the deputy ought to be thrown in jail. It was a quiet party.

Between nine and ten the press dribbled in and the drinking began in earnest. The older hands grabbed the seats on the overstuffed petit-point sofa, the others settled down on the heavy chairs. Mrs. Collins, a little overstuffed herself,

circulated among them, refilling glasses. They all took seconds, except Harry O'Connor, who had grabbed the corner chair by the entrance hall and parked his equipment safely beside it. He had said hello to Collins and to two of the reporters, and beyond that he had said nothing; he was plotting pictures, and watching the animals.

Shortly after ten the last carload of reporters pulled through the gate with a nervous honk and plodded noisily up the stairs. Collins greeted them in the hall and led them into his foyer, where they identified themselves and fell immediately into what spirit there was.

A few minutes later a guard came up to Collins, and led him back, past O'Connor, into the foyer. With careful, picture-composing eyes, O'Connor watched the warden talk with the guard, then stand looking thoughtfully into the pattern on the phony Oriental rug. The cheap politician, O'Connor thought, throwing a free party on the state budget. O'Connor closed his eyes, and reflected on the privileges of his profession: later he would show this bastard what power really was, and where it resided. Why be a nice guy, he thought, when milk is so cheap?

5

On each table was a bottle of scotch, a bottle of rye and a bottle of bourbon, and on the Governor's table—table one, dead center and in front of the first row—there was also a bottle of cognac for the Governor. He mixed it with soda before dinner and drank it straight after dinner, during the brief speeches by officers of the Capitol Reporters Association, through the first few sketches of the Spoof. By ten o'clock the bottle was two-fifths empty and the Governor

was glowing; but the flame was controlled. Between the numbers he talked amusingly with Reed and the six members of the executive staff seated at the table; during the numbers he laughed, sometimes naturally, sometimes through the application of political wisdom.

They had come to the last skit now, and the curtain was rising-on the most elaborate scene in the show. There was a desk at the right and a girl behind it, two easy chairs flanking a completely outsized television set (actually a boxed movie screen) in the center of the stage, dozens of camp chairs scattered all around, bottles all over the floor. Above the television set was a cardboard sign with movable numbers; as the curtain went up it read "482." Two doors led through the brown canvas backdrop. At the far left was a small steamroller borrowed from the city, and four men sitting on the big wheel, kicking it with their heels. They were humming.

Suddenly three men burst in at the right.

"Where are you handsome gentlemen from?" said the girl at the desk, carelessly spreading the V of her low-necked dress.

"The great dairy state of Wisconsin!"

"Welcome," cried the four men on the steamroller, "welcome to you great warriors from the great state of Wisconsin! Oh," they sang:

On Wisconsin!
In convention,
Delegates you got!
Climb aboard
The Clelland wagon,
We don't need

A lot
More votes and
Come next winter
You'll be glad you
Did what's best for you!
For we've got a plan
And if you're not our man,
Then we'll
Screw
You!

The singers took a deep breath and yelled, "Hooray! *Meet the candidate!*" Four more men, purposeful and earnest, sped from the door to the left and out into the main room, kicking bottles off the stage at the musicians. They corralled the three delegates and dragged them away through the other door. From backstage came a series of loud Howdys and What'll you have's, and the magnified sizzle of a siphon. The girl at the desk demurely tugged the V tight again. A tall, lanky man came out of the door to the right and she said, "Yes, Mister Reed."

"It's great," said the imitation Reed, "great!"

"Great!" cried the four men on the steamroller.

"Reed" walked to the sign, reached behind it, and changed the number to 485. "Great!" he said again.

"The greatest!" cried the men on the steamroller, and "Reed" disappeared.

There was a commotion to the right of the stage and a placard reading NEW YORK was thrown in from the wings. Behind it staggered seven men, some of them quite genuinely drunk. "Yowee!" cried one of them, looking at the secretary. "Beaver tail!"

"Where are you handsome gentlemen from?" she said, her fingers hovering over an alarm button, so labeled, on the wall behind her.

"Welcome to you doughty warriors from the doughty state. . . ."

It had not, the Governor thought, come to this as yet; he reached forward an admirably firm hand and poured himself another two fingers of cognac. Yet it might; another hundred and fifty pledged votes, and the steamroller would certainly roll. If you took up a trade, you used its tools. There was another song being sung on the stage, and a roar of laughter from the assembled politicians; the Governor flashed up an automatic smile. It was not, as a matter of fact, so funny as all that; it was too necessary, and maybe it was even dirty. Still, the boys had done their job; he had not realized before how many people saw behind the scholarly mask, the costume of professor-turned-public servant, to the political hand, the expert using the political tools. He looked over the audience of state officials, university people, civil servants and businessmen; well, he thought, it's all among friends. Not very good friends, perhaps, but friends. Some of them would be delegates—Clelland delegates.

On the stage a man in cowboy boots and ten-gallon hat swung a lariat too loosely over a beam and around the neck of another delegate, who was now rising in the air, obviously hung, while the songsters ran about distractedly and the imitation Reed, cursing, spun the cardboard numbers to show the loss of a vote. Looking closely the Governor could see the harness to which the rope was attached, and

admire the journalistic mentality that was willing to make such calls on its ingenuity and its spare time.

He looked around again, and caught Irving Moss and Clarence Ransom eyeing him with a mysterious pleasure; they looked away immediately, and he thought: that's something to do with hanging; they're not all friends here. The times, he thought sentimentally, have gone to hell. It used to be you judged a man by the quality of his enemies, and today you've got to be Everybody's Friend. Then, with the thought and the last shot of brandy, the footing of discipline suddenly fell away, and he stood at the edge of a great plateau, below him the neat fields of imagined pleasure, the path ahead easy, gentle, downhill. Far behind him the hounds were baying, and he wondered absently which spoor they were following—Harriet, Helen, The One Spot, Ira Field, his books. . . .

So you are from I-o-way! Whadja say?

You doan like his looks?

He reads too many books?

Well, remember I-o-way, corn, not hay

Is what the price supports. . . .

Now there was the full feeling of the brandy, the drunkenness of irresponsibility. Everybody else was laughing at something; he laughed out loud. He permitted himself to think of the convention as the reporters thought of it, to see the political career as a trade scarcely worth taking up at all, like prostitution—fun for a while but degrading. He allowed himself to speculate on how much money was necessary these days to choose a nominee, to elect a president, and where the money came from, and how it had to be given back. . . .

Oh, Reno,
Flying out to Reno,
We shall have a beano
Where celebrities lay. . . .

He turned again to Ransom and Moss, and found that again they were looking at him. An ungainly coincidence, he thought, and winked at them. What shall we do, he thought, with the drunken sailor? What shall we do with Mancioni? And suddenly there was a new vision of a man cowering in the corner of a large room, with a large wooden chair on a platform in the center and people sitting in a grandstand cheering. With this vision disappeared the realization of defeat, the drunken clarity of irresponsibility; there were decisions to be made, an existence to be played out to whatever conclusion might await. Discipline came beneath his feet again, and with it a blast of guilt at an obligation shirked; he turned his thoughts fully to the stage, to pay the attention owed to the reporters and their friends. . . .

The secretary was standing front and center and stripping while the drunken delegates in sloppy ranks of four sang with full-throated incompetence:

America, America,
We cast our votes for thee!
For motherhood and brotherhood!
Now you . . . be good . . . to . . . *me!*

The secretary, now entirely naked, struck a pose and then ran off stage. The delegates staggered away through the various doors, calling "taxes, oleomargarine, guns and butter, peace, galloping socialism, state's rights, segrega-

tion, free press, creeping socialism, public lands, corruption." Then there was the whir of a movie camera, and on the screen of the huge television set appeared a newsreel shot of the last convention, panning up to a group of high-school girls in ill-fitting dirndls. There was the rap of a gavel, and a voice calling "The convention will puh-lease come to order while we prai-sant to you delegates from all over this grai-ait countree, and to the peepul of Amurrica, the Indo-Aramaic Chorus of New Algonquit High School!"

"Swobonlonleen," sang the sound track, reporters in falsetto, as the screen showed a more recent newsreel of newborn chimpanzees at the Chicago Zoo, "lonleen, hassen-woo, hoo? hoo? Grogahgoogoo, gringlang, loffenwibble—*Clelland! Clelland! Clelland!*"

"A little demonstration," said an announcer's voice, "planted in the girls' chorus. They've quieted it down now, and we're ready for the voting. . . ."

"Alabama!" said a loud voice. "Thirteen votes!"

"Voatsh?"

"For the nomination for president of the United States!"

"Oh," said another voice blearily. "*That.*"

"How does Alabama vote?"

"Arabama . . . Arabama . . . Aw, shut up."

"How does Alabama vote?"

"Aw, shut ya mouf. *Shut it, I say!*"

The screen went blank. "Due to technical difficulties beyond our control," said a voice as the curtain fell on the sketch, "this telecast from Convention Hall is temporarily suspended. We present Laddie Lou Liffe and his melting Irish organ. . . ."

Now it was almost midnight, and at the warden's party the demand for soda fell off radically. The reporters crawled out from their superiority and their day-long disappointment, and began to cheer up each other and the assembled authorities with the traditional stories of the trade, mostly funny and inaccurate. The room became noisy. O'Connor sat in his chair, fondling his photographer's bag, watching, nursing the drink he had kept all evening. Then the warden came by, on his way to the bedroom to see if the women were happy, and O'Connor pounced.

"I'd like to talk to you a minute, Collins."

"What is it?"

"A couple of hours from now I'd like to go down to that cell and take some pictures."

"I'm sorry, it's against regulations. You can't do it. After the execution you can take a death photograph—that's all. You ought to know that."

"Sure, Collins," said O'Connor, pulling the warden into the foyer. "Sure. It's just that this time the regulations are different."

The warden scowled and shook his head. "Mr. O'Connor, I don't have the authority—"

"You don't understand. Mr. Ransom and I feel that this execution needs some celebration in the press. We intend to celebrate it with pictures, editorials—the works."

"What are you doing to me?" said Collins, suddenly afraid.

"Now," said O'Connor, "it wouldn't hurt your career if

there was a nice picture of you in the paper, consoling the prisoner. It might help. And Father Flaherty doesn't want to be a stir chaplain all his life. It might help him, too."

"But, O'Connor—"

"Then, again, you have another choice. This party of yours, now. You're giving it on state money, which isn't right. There's no appropriation for entertainment of newspapermen and officials the night before a frying. None that I ever heard of. You wouldn't want to see a story in the paper about this shindig, would you?"

"It's always done," said Collins. He stepped away, but O'Connor put a hand on his forearm. "Always. You wouldn't print that."

"I wouldn't," O'Connor admitted. "Never. But Mr. Ransom," he added, shaking his head, "Mr. Ransom is unprincipled. You never know what he might print." Collins seemed incapable of speech, so O'Connor continued, "On the other hand, Mr. Ransom's always nice to his friends. And to protect you, if you let me take pictures for him, he might foot the bill for this party himself." He smiled at Collins and looked in the mirror to see his own smile. "Mr. Ransom's rich," he said slowly. "It isn't much money to him."

"But it's the poor boy's last hours on earth," said Collins nervously. "You wouldn't—you wouldn't risk his immortal soul just for a few pictures. You wouldn't. You're a good Catholic—"

"No," O'Connor said sadly, enjoying every minute of it. "I'm not a good Catholic. It's just another sin to me, one just like the others. So you see what you're up against."

"I see it," said Collins bitterly. "But how do you save

me, when the picture comes out and it's against regulations?"

"We'll do our best. We can't give an absolute guarantee, of course. But we'll do our best. And we'll do our best the other way, too, if you don't play."

"Bastard!"

"Not me. Mr. Ransom. But to show you that I respect the poor boy's immortal soul, I won't take his last hour on earth. Just the next to last. You get me down there at two and I'll promise to be out by three. Maybe even before three, if everybody co-operates."

"Tommy!" The call came from the bedroom, belligerent, secure.

"Okay," Collins said. "I'll take you down at two."

"Thanks," O'Connor said, and, suffused with joy, went to get himself a second drink, counting in his mind how many servilities, how many beggings for pictures, he had just avenged; how many still to go.

7

The Governor was singing in his private elevator as it went up from the garage: "On Wisconsin, in convention, delegates you got, Bump De-dump-bump; Dump De hump-bump, Bumb bump bump bump bump, da da da." The door opened and he stepped back to let Reed precede him. Reed hesitated. "Go ahead, me boy," the Governor said. "Yours is the nobler fate."

Reed went to the door to the Governor's office, opened it and stood aside with a courtly gesture. "Yours the more difficult," he said.

"All right, you little rascal. You want to talk seriously. All right. Talk seriously."

"How many drinks did you have?" Reed said as the Governor came fragrantly past him.

"About thirteen all told, I suppose. Come on, now, take advantage of me. I'm weakened."

"Sit down," Reed suggested, "before you go up in flames."

"Danger," said the Governor, sitting down hard behind his desk. "Combustibles. Flammable. Me wife nearly burned to death using the thing. Ban it in the state."

Reed pulled an envelope from the breast pocket of his jacket, removed a folded sheet and ceremoniously smoothed it open on the Governor's desk. He took the fountain pen out of his pocket, decapped it, and put beside the paper. "Sign here," he said.

"Mancioni?"

"Yes."

"You insist?"

"Billy, it's not abstract or political, it's not anything but human. Look—there's a man sitting in an electric chair, big ugly wood chair, and you're pulling the switch that kills him. Try: you can see him in your mind."

"No. I never met the man." The Governor looked to the other door, the one that led to the bedroom, to Helen who was waiting, waiting in his room for the first time in years. He picked up the pen, pulled the paper toward him and looked up at Reed. "It's for you," he said. "For you and for principle. Yes."

"What's got into you, Billy?"

The Governor slowly put down the pen and turned his

undivided attention to Reed, who stood looking at the paper, nervously aware that the Governor had not yet signed. The Governor thought, let him guess, and said, "I've made a great discovery. Like Chlorophyll. Either way I win." He picked up the pen again, grinned at Reed, then bent over and signed the order. With deliberate motions he put the cap on the pen and in the grand manner handed pen and paper back to Reed. He was still grinning.

"I don't like it, Billy."

"I must say you're a hard man to please."

"What's the matter?"

The Governor looked again at the door, and suddenly longed to be on the other side, done with the daily authority. He yawned; but the yawn broke in the middle as he realized, quite suddenly, that a man, a real, live man, could have died at his decision while he was with Helen, and that Helen, like Reed, was able to see such things in the mind, and he felt a great gratitude to Reed for, all unconscious, keeping from Helen this experience, this dirty memory. What pleasure had he felt, he wondered, at signing the order? What visions had he, all unconscious, conjured up in argument? And why was he pretending to this extent to drunkenness? What pleasure was in that?

"What's the matter, Billy?"

"Not a thing."

Reed studied the order and the signature, and finally said, "You know why I don't like it? I think you've lost your confidence."

The Governor stood up. "This," he said, "is not the time for penetration. Go. Remove the electronic threat from the future of that estimable young murderer. But analyze me no analyses tonight. All I know, and all I care to know,

is that either way I win. I have dutched the book, and if this be lack of confidence, then so it be." He grinned again, more broadly than ever. "Come on. Not tonight."

"Can you call Collins about this?"

"No, call him yourself," the Governor said. "And whatever he says, don't disturb me tonight. Not tonight." He started toward the door, but Reed stopped him with: "Will you wait while I call?"

The Governor had stopped at the door itself, and with an effort of will, and the satisfaction of making that effort tonight, turned back to Reed, his assistant, his friend, and said, "Go ahead. Quickly."

Reed took the official directory from the Governor's desk, got the operator and gave the number. He listened, his eyes still on the Governor, and still troubled, while the telephone at the other end rang and rang and rang again, and no one answered. "I'll try again," he said finally.

"They're in a drunken party," the Governor said cheerfully. "They can't hear it."

"Yes," Reed said bitterly, and put the receiver down. "Vultures, every one of them."

"Take the car," the Governor said, "and drive carefully. Inspect that excellent prison that we ourselves built so recently, so long ago. When you get there, make in my name any commitments that your personal ethic considers desirable. And whatever you do, I win."

"Shall I let you know what happens?"

"Under no circumstances. Even if there's a riot, I don't want to hear about it. I've given you damn few orders, Frank, but that's an order. Do you understand?"

Reed shook his head slowly. "No. I don't understand."

The Governor reached his hand behind him on the leather-covered door, until he felt the doorknob. Then his grin became sly, and even childish, more confusing than ever, and he said, "You will, Frank. Soon, too."

8

She was asleep in the bed, but scrawled in soap on the mirror on the medicine chest in the bathroom was a message: WAKE ME UP. So he rinsed the liquor out of his mouth, and went back and sat on the bed, and woke her up.

9

O'Connor was sitting in the chair by the foyer, waiting for two o'clock, so he was the first to see Reed. He got up quickly and caught Reed halfway into the living room.

"Commutation?"

"Where's Collins?"

"I'll go get him for you," O'Connor said gently, "if you tell me. You know what happens to you when you set foot in there with those drunken hyenas?"

"Yes. Get me Collins."

"That's an all-embracing, universal Yes?"

Reed smiled. "Yes."

"Fine." O'Connor walked whistling to the living room, picked the warden out of a howling, unhappy crowd at the bar, and plucked him by the elbow to privacy.

"Not yet, God damn it," Collins said.

"Maybe yes, maybe no," O'Connor said. "You got company."

"Who?"

"Frank Reed. The Governor's assistant."

"Holy Jaisus! Where?"

"Out in the foyer."

Collins strode from the living room, pushing aside the liquorously incurious reporters in his path. He did half a genuflection when he saw Reed, and then came slowly forward.

"Couldn't get you on the telephone," Reed said.

"I don't know why," Collins said. "Been here all night."

"So it seems."

"Must've been the operator. The operator. She don't always get the number here."

"Well," said Reed, "no harm done." He reached into his pocket and pulled out the Governor's order.

Collins read it quickly, then nodded, once, twice. "Yes," he said. "Of course. I'm glad to see it. Come in and have a drink with us."

Reed stood still, looking down at Collins and feeling the frustrations of days rising through his chest. "Aren't you going to tell the poor son of a bitch?" he said finally, angrily.

"Yes, of course. Right now."

O'Connor strolled up to them. "I'll come too," he said. "Just let me get my stuff."

"What are you coming for?" said Reed.

"To take pictures," O'Connor said pleasantly. "We're old friends, aren't we, Mr. Reed?"

"Oh, hell, Harry, I'm not going to argue with you while that poor slob sits down there and thinks he's going to die. Come on along."

"Maybe I better tell the reporters," Collins said timidly. "I mean, that's why they're here."

"You want the glory, Collins?" O'Connor said.

"For Christ's sake, Harry," said Reed, "get your stuff."

Collins looked around nervously and said, "I'll assign one of the men to take you down." He stepped into the kitchen and O'Connor padded back to his chair, leaving Reed alone in the foyer, hitting his thigh impatiently with his fist. O'Connor came back with the Rollei strapped around his neck and Collins led a guard from the kitchen.

"Let's go," Reed said.

"Yes," Collins said. "I'll stay here."

"There's going to be a ding-dong for the telephones," O'Connor said compassionately over his shoulder, and hurried to catch Reed and the guard walking down the two flights of steps to the death row.

There was another guard leaning his chair against the last door in the row; when he saw the party outside the bars he snapped to attention, just in case, and walked with remembered military precision to their service. "Open 'em up," said Collins' guard, handing in a key.

"Yes, sir." The guard put the key in a switch by the door and broke the magnetic connection that held the bars to the ground; they slid up through well-oiled grooves and the visitors stepped in. The bars slid down behind them.

The block was a queasy place, for all its modernity, its linoleum floor, its subdued lighting, its cleanliness. Reed listened as though he expected to hear the lowing of animals in a stockyard. They were facing a green door and so by extension the monstrous throne beyond. "Where's Mancioni?" Reed said harshly.

"The last door. The priest's with him."

"He won't need the priest tonight," Reed said, and some of the nervousness went out of him.

"The Governor set it back?"

"No. He canceled it."

"That's good." They were just outside the door now, and the guard turned another key in another switch. The door swung open.

Inside Mancioni was sitting on the bed, his head low in his hands; the priest had an arm around his shoulders and was talking softly, "God sent his only Son here to suffer, and we all must suffer. Suffering and pain are the trails through which we pass to glory——" he looked up, annoyed. "Who are you?"

"I'm Reed. Clelland's assistant."

"Yes?"

"I brought an order of commutation."

"Glory to God! Did you hear that, Louis?"

The composition was best from the doorway; O'Connor elbowed the guard aside and took his stance. He got his first picture as the priest stood up.

"What's it mean?" Mancioni said, turning his expressionless eyes to the doorway.

"It means you live!" the priest cried.

"Yeah?" Mancioni looked to the priest and shook his head. "But what's it mean?"

"All the years," the priest said as O'Connor pranced, set and took another one, hoarding his shots, he wouldn't have time to change film. "All the years you'll have now to repent, to make your penance clear and sure to Christ!"

It was too much for O'Connor. "All the years," he mimicked, still looking into the camera. "All the years

to make friends with hoods and killers, the boys in the clubhouse."

"What are you saying?" cried the priest.

"Stop selling your wares. So he goes to Mass for forty years here, gets to be your best customer. It's fine climate for the immortal soul, hanging around the pen. It doesn't make one Christ-on-a-stick bit of difference, Flaherty. Except maybe to you."

"Get out of here!" the priest said. "What sort of a man are you? Do you understand that this man has just been snatched from the jaws of death?"

"Jesus, how you talk. What're you doing to the boy? You think he wants to live a long life in a stinking jail? It doesn't make any difference to him—just to you."

"But of course it makes a difference," the priest said. "A great difference."

There was a moment's silence, Reed still immobilized near the door, the priest fighting to adjust his temper to the incredible instant, O'Connor returning to his camera. Then Mancioni said, "Nah. He's right. It don't make no difference. It don't make no difference at all."

"My son," said the priest, but Reed stepped between him and Mancioni, and as he came within the camera's scope O'Connor took the picture, the picture that appeared in half a dozen magazines, and won five prizes, and is still shown, regularly, in every exhibition of great photography.

"You idiots," Reed said, and there were tears of rage and fear in his eyes, "you miserable idiots. My God, it makes all the difference in the world!"

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